THE ULTIMATE MUSIC GUIDE

FLEETWOOD MAC

NEW COLLECTORS' EDITION

"IT'S LIKE BEING IN GROUP THERAPY"
The triumph and trauma of Rumours

"WE'VE NEVER DONE WHAT WAS EXPECTED..."
The Peter Green years revisited

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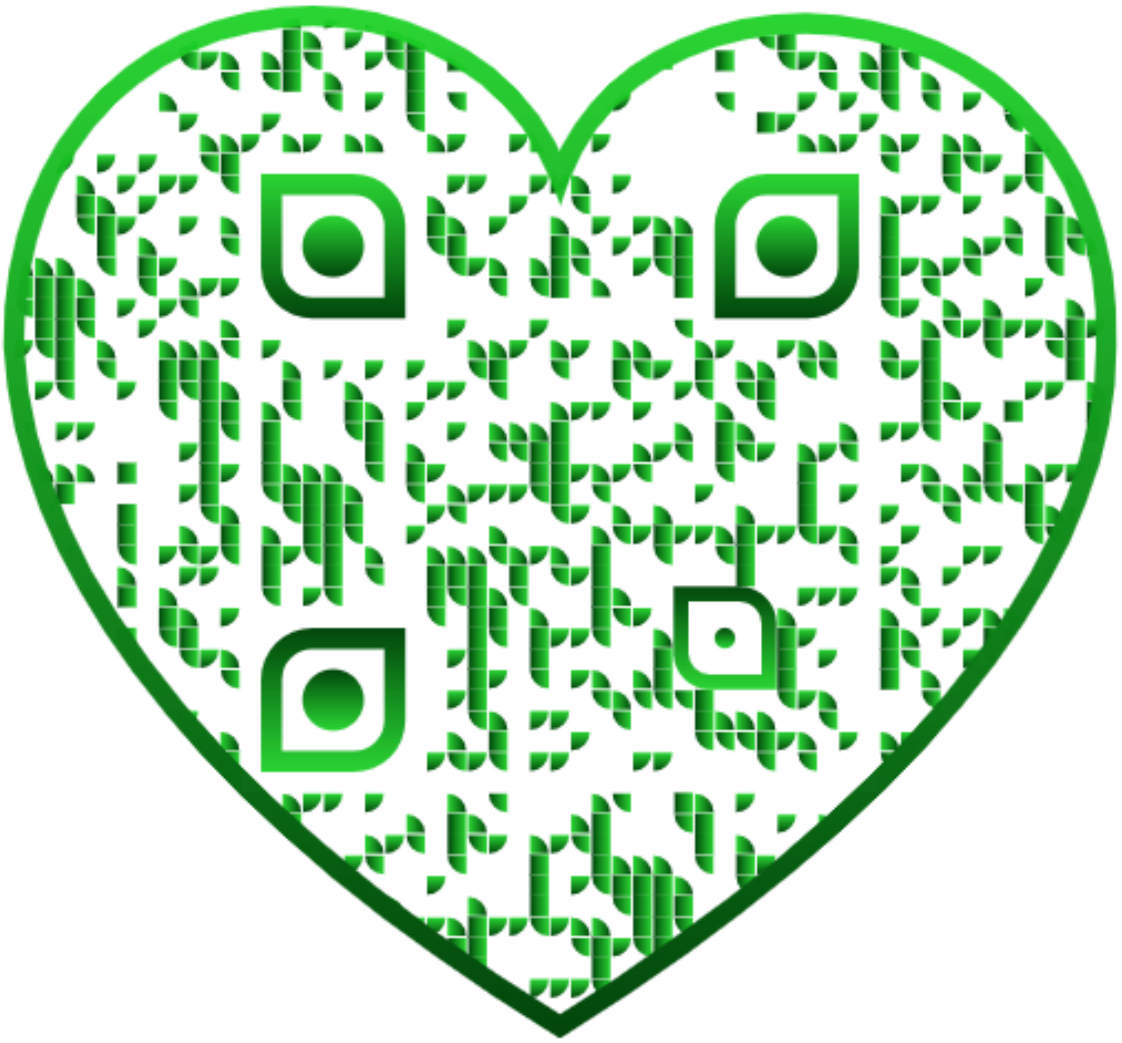

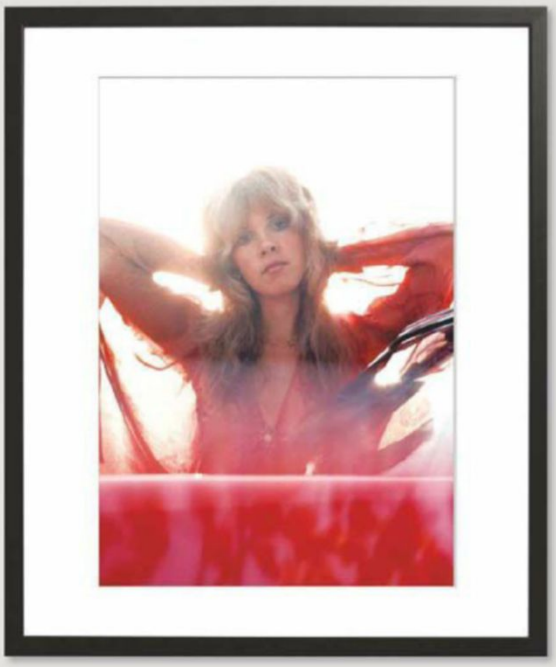

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PLAY ON...

EARLY 1969. CALIFORNIA has been hit by a series of destructive floods, so bad that the international telephone operator is sceptical a connection can be made between London and Los Angeles. When the call goes through, however, the *NME*'s Nick Logan has a few demanding questions for the first leader of Fleetwood Mac, Peter Green. One is how Green's band will sustain their reputation as blues purists in the wake of a big hit single, the expansive "Albatross". Will their next single be another change from what their fans have come to expect?

"I don't really care," says Green, yawning. "I never have done, really. We've never done what was expected of Fleetwood Mac – we've always done the opposite. We just do what we want to do."

Thus begins the remarkable story of Fleetwood Mac, a saga unparalleled in rock. Over the next four and a half decades, the band's history has often read like an infinite series of surprise plot twists, where radical upheavals arrive with every new album. Key members come and go, lost to religious cults and mental breakdowns, victims of multiple romantic traumas. Musical directions and locations change as frequently as the lineup: the blues evolve into the apotheosis of sophisticated pop; and a remote Hampshire commune is swapped for the LA highlife.

As the revealing features collected in this *Ultimate Music Guide* prove, the journalists of *Uncut*, *NME* and *Melody Maker* have been alongside Fleetwood Mac every step of the way. They documented the rise and fall of Peter Green's band, the emergence of Christine McVie, the transitional lineups of the early '70s, the dramatic arrival of Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks, and the glory and devastation that soon followed. "Being in Fleetwood Mac is more like being in group therapy," noted the mostly redoubtable Mick Fleetwood in 1977, as he contemplated the seismic impact of *Rumours* and laid bare – not for the last time – the private lives of its key players.

Our *Ultimate Music Guide*, though, focuses on Fleetwood Mac's extraordinary music as much as their intimate affairs. To that end, we've commissioned new, in-depth reviews of every single one of their albums, from lost gems to some of the biggest-selling releases of all time. Like everything about Fleetwood Mac, it makes for an uncommonly long and complicated story, but one that is never less than compelling.

"Looking back, it's like listening to war stories," Mick Fleetwood told *Uncut* in 2002. "But you have to remember there were people yelling in pain with their legs shot away. There's blood and guts and disagreements still to this day. But that's what makes it mean a shit."

CONTENTS

6 "If we did get big, we would stay as we are..." CLASSIC INTERVIEW Introducing the band in 1967: blues explorers with big ambitions

10 FLEETWOOD MAC ALBUM REVIEW Their debut, in all its strange, dazzling glory

12 MR WONDERFUL ALBUM REVIEW The pressure is on: a rather ragged and rushed second still has plenty to admire

14 "We've never done what was expected!" CLASSIC INTERVIEW The band ponder Confucius, success and the New York underworld

18 "I get a schoolboy pleasure from shocking people." CLASSIC INTERVIEW Still playing the blues, but now with added attitude

28 THEN PLAY ON ALBUM REVIEW Acid rock and folk start to exert greater influence on the Mac

30 "I want to change my whole life." CLASSIC INTERVIEW The first great upheaval, as Peter Green leaves and Christine McVie is coaxed into the fold

36 KILN HOUSE ALBUM REVIEW The new lineup, and the band's oddest, most underrated work

38 "We've been battered about the head with a giant club." CLASSIC INTERVIEW It's 1971: Jeremy Spencer joins the Children Of God, Green returns briefly, chaos prevails

44 FUTURE GAMES ALBUM REVIEW Where new recruit Bob Welch has the idea of mixing male and female vocals...

46 BARE TREES ALBUM REVIEW Including Danny Kirwan's final, beautiful Mac song

48 "There's no reason why we shouldn't stay together for a long while." CLASSIC INTERVIEW The band find a new direction, but the cracks are beginning to show

52 PENGUIN ALBUM REVIEW "Weird," said Christine McVie. "Wishy-washy," said *Melody Maker*. "Slippery," says *Uncut*

54 MYSTERY TO ME ALBUM REVIEW A curate's egg, with a very strange cover

56 "God, I can't go on with this any longer!" CLASSIC INTERVIEW Jeremy Spencer talks Jesus, acid and disappearing on the streets of LA

60 HEROES ARE HARD TO FIND ALBUM REVIEW Bob Welch's cosmic rock, some fine ballads, and a flourish from Sneaky Pete Kleinow

62 FLEETWOOD MAC ALBUM REVIEW Nicks and Buckingham arrive, a new greatness beckons

64 "The whole band's gone through a complete emotional trauma..." CLASSIC INTERVIEW Just as the two couples in the band are splitting up, the Mac become huge in the States

70 RUMOURS ALBUM REVIEW A perfect piece of pop rock invention, and a cultural behemoth

72 "Being in Fleetwood Mac is more like being in group therapy!" CLASSIC INTERVIEW The psychodramas are laid bare in the studio, and *Rumours* is a gazillion-selling global hit

76 TUSK ALBUM REVIEW Following up the world's biggest album with its most expensive – an adventurous and fragile double

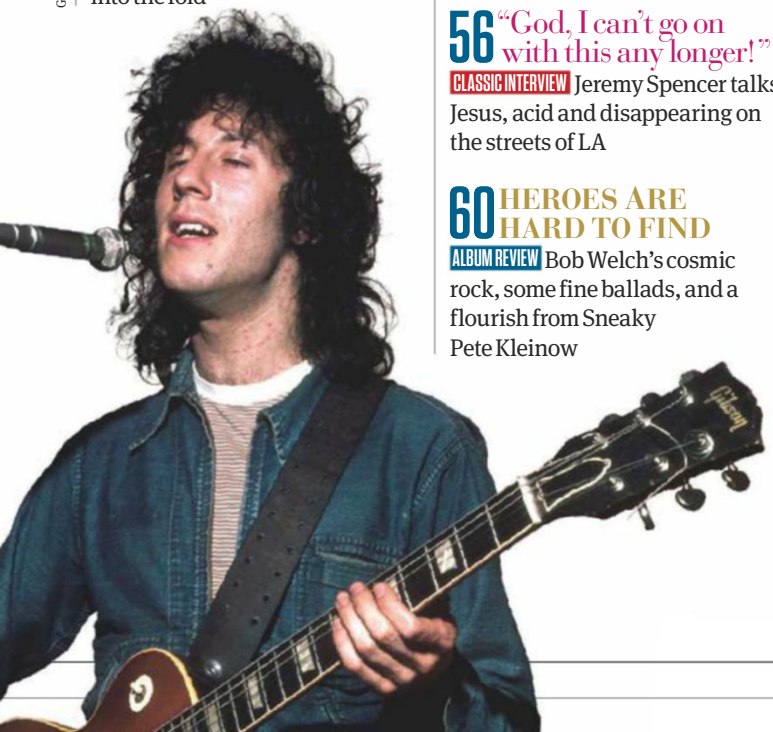
78 "There's always been a very mystical thing about Fleetwood Mac." CLASSIC INTERVIEW Flying high, the Mac consider Dennis Wilson, punk rock and the Iranian Revolution

88 MIRAGE ALBUM REVIEW Too polished and glossy, but with a couple of killer tracks

90 TANGO IN THE NIGHT ALBUM REVIEW Lindsey Buckingham's search for love, and for a way out of Fleetwood Mac. Christine McVie shines...

Baby-faced Mac in '68: (l-r) McVie, Spencer (front), Fleetwood, Kirwan, Green

The Mac in 1974, with Bob Welch *(second right)*. Inset below left: Peter Green in 1968



GETTY IMAGES; HARRY GOODWIN

The 'classic' Mac, in all their smooth, dysfunctional glory, circa '77

92 BEHIND THE MASK
ALBUM REVIEW No arguing, no boozing, and no really great songs

94 TIME
ALBUM REVIEW The wilderness years continue – but there's still plenty to enjoy here

96 "There's blood and guts and disagreement still to this day."
CLASSIC INTERVIEW It's 2003, and the band are back fighting, loving, and making great music...

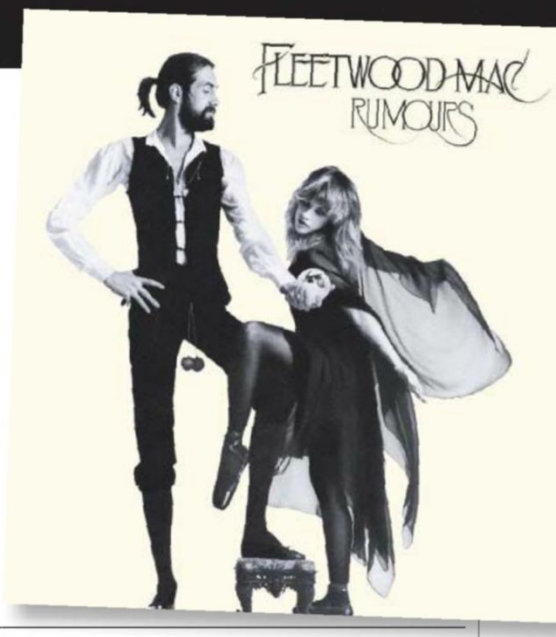
108 SAY YOU WILL
ALBUM REVIEW Buckingham and Nicks return to the band, but Christine McVie's songwriting is sorely missed

110 "Cocaine is God's way of telling you that you've got too much money."
CLASSIC INTERVIEW Fleetwood's Q&A with *Uncut* readers – including Nils Lofgren and Ice Cube

114 COMPILATIONS
ALBUM REVIEW A guide through the baffling world of Fleetwood Mac's best-ofs and live albums

118 MISCELLANY
Solo albums, videos, rarities and more...

122 STOP ME...
On the road and onstage this summer with Fleetwood, Nicks, Buckingham, and both McVies



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GETTY IMAGES

Jeremy Spencer and Peter Green in Fleetwood Mac, 1967

"If we did get big, we would stay as we are..."

Welcome, please, an auspicious new band on the London scene. They are called **FLEETWOOD MAC**, and their leader Peter Green is already being hailed as "the true voice of the blues guitar". They have, though, bigger ambitions — "I'm not a blues purist," claims Green — and a notably promising rhythm section: bassist John McVie, who likes wine, women and song; and drummer Mick Fleetwood, who is "very tall and very funny"...

TAKEN FROM MM 9/9/1967

PETER GREEN IS the newest, toughest and meanest of the guitar cowboys. He plays hard blues with no concessions. He built up his name among blues fans as Clapton's successor in the great blues breeding house, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers.

Peter was born in the East End of London in 1946 and lived there until he was nine and moved to Putney. When he was 10 his brother gave him a Spanish guitar and he worked out a few chords. Later he switched to bass and when he was 15 earned pocket money playing with Bobby Denim And The Dominoes.

He met John Mayall briefly, but lost touch. After putting an advertisement in *Melody Maker*, John called him up and said he had been looking for him. With breaks for working with Peter Bardens And The Shotgun Express, he was with Mayall until forming his own group, the Fleetwood Mac, a success at the recent Windsor Jazz Festival.

TAKEN FROM MM 16/3/1968

AMONG BRITAIN'S YOUNG blues fans, Eric Clapton was once hailed as a god, then discarded when he left John Mayall's Bluesbreakers for the Cream. Taking his place in their affections was Peter Green, a 21-year-old from Bethnal Green, hailed as the true voice of the blues guitar and symbol of dedication.

Peter left Mayall to form his own group, the Fleetwood Mac, and it may come as something of a shock to his fans to learn that he is not a raving blues purist and started life as a rocker.

"The group has been very successful since we formed it last August. There is a big interest in blues in Britain, although not what I call real blues, more progressive stuff from Jimi Hendrix and the Cream. But it's definitely spreading. There are only two places in the whole country where we don't go down – a couple of dead universities."

"John Mayall has been the spearhead in reviving interest in blues. He's really done a lot for it. I've been playing blues guitar for about three years, and before that I was playing bass. When I left John, I didn't want to form a group. I wanted to go to Chicago, but it was difficult to be sure of being safe and I ended up dropping the idea. I was happy doing nothing, but Mike Vernon said, 'Why not?' and he talked me into it."

Peter has been featuring rock'n'roll a lot in his act. What did he think of the current revival?

"I'm a bit shocked about it. I hope people don't think we're doing it because of the revival! I was first interested in rock'n'roll and Bill Haley when I was 10 years old. It has a big place in my musical heritage. I had a picture of Haley on my bedroom wall. We're all big rock fans in the group. We started out doing 'At The Hop' as a joke, then we did 'Ready, Teddy' and 'Lucille', and we really enjoyed them.

"A lot of so-called blues purists are against us doing it, but I don't care what they think. We play what we like – we're not just playing for purists. I'm not a blues purist. I don't know every record ever made, or their numbers, and I'm not interested in talking about the blues all night. I just play blues – and rock'n'roll." *CHRIS WELCH*

> "I WAS FIRST INTERESTED IN BILL HALEY WHEN I WAS 10. THAT HAS A BIG PLACE IN MY MUSICAL HERITAGE"
> PETER GREEN

TAKEN FROM NME 23/3/1968

FOR A GROUP challenging John Mayall's dominance of the blues LP market, Fleetwood Mac are full of surprises. They thumb their noses at the blues purist, admit frankly that what they seek is commercial success and, to those who scoff and accuse them of copying the irreplaceable American blues maestros, they answer openly: "Sure we do. And why not?"

But like most British bluesmen, the four Macs are decided anti-stars who, in the words of their handouts, dress for comfort rather than effect. Take the group's soft-spoken 19-year-old guitarist Jeremy Spencer (and I use the word 'take' figuratively, because there are certain places you couldn't take him. The Savoy and The Ritz, for instance!)

However, in the Soho coffee bar where we met, he blended well with the surroundings. The midget-sized Jerry – 5ft 4in in his socks – was sitting on a stool munching sardine and cucumber rolls and waiting for fellow Mac guitarist Peter Green, who never did arrive.

Jerry's choice of clothing is for comfort rather than effect: white plimsolls, blue denim jeans, a cord Levi jacket and a black duffle coat. To add to the image, Jerry rolls his own cigarettes and has a mop of black curly hair that doesn't know where to draw the line, spilling as it does down the sides of his face and meeting haphazardly under his chin in an undecided beard.

So much for appearance; now for the facts. Fleetwood Mac, for the uninitiated, are four highly talented blues musicians whose first LP, (*Peter Green's*) *Fleetwood Mac*, is doing very nicely in the *NME* album chart. Individually they are: Peter Green, lead guitarist from East Putney, who replaced Eric Clapton in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. Despite the title of the LP, he would like it known that the name of the group is simply Fleetwood Mac.

Drumming funny man Mick Fleetwood

RAY STEVENSON/REX, CHRIS WALTER

Peter, says Jerry, is a down-to-earth type, plays guitar with no frills, is the leader of the group, is heavily influenced by BB King and can make a guitar sing.

Bass guitarist John McVie, also a former Bluesbreaker, is from Ealing and, says Jerry, is the Bill Wyman type and likes wine, women and song. On drums is another former Bluesbreaker, Mick Fleetwood, the giant of the group at 6ft 4in. He comes from Salisbury, lives in the Edgware Road and is "very tall and very funny". Finally, there's Jerry himself, who plays 'bottleneck' guitar after the style of his idol, the late Elmore James, although he states that the piano is really his instrument.

Though it seems they have been around much longer, Fleetwood Mac was formed only last August and played their first date at the Windsor Festival. Since then they have accumulated a large and loyal following from dates all over the country. Besides the blues, the group's stage act also includes a generous sprinkling of rock'n'roll (a group feature long before the rock revival) and Jerry also throws in some hilarious impressions of, among others, Cliff Richard, Elvis, Alexis Korner and sundry other stereotype characters.

"Rock'n'roll isn't far from the blues," says Jerry, "and vice versa – the blues isn't far from rock."

Probably they like their audiences to stand and listen to them, I asked? "No," says Jerry, "we like them to listen to the slow ones, but to have a rave to the fast ones."

Then probably they resent pop fans in an audience? "People who like us are the young girls who may not know the first thing about the blues: we have gone down well with crowds where John Mayall would have died. We don't like the purist element, who won't take music for what it is worth, its face value. They want to start analysing the music and take it to pieces. Young girls and young audiences are more open-minded, less analytical."

What about allegations from the purists who claim that British blues will always be a weak copy of American blues? "People may say we copy. They say I copy Elmore James. I agree, but why shouldn't I? He to me is the greatest. I've got every record he ever made at home. Sure we copy the style, but we think we add something to it." I noticed he was wearing a badge on his lapel proclaiming, 'Believe I'll Dust My Blues', which Elmore James fans will know is a line from one of his songs.

Because of the differing styles of their lead guitarists – Peter with his BB King leanings and Jerry with his Elmore James influences – the Mac are able to offer a varied act onstage. It seemed puzzling to me, however, that two guitarists of such conflicting styles should have come together in the same group, particularly as Jerry said that often when Peter is playing he stands down and vice versa when Jerry is doing his style.

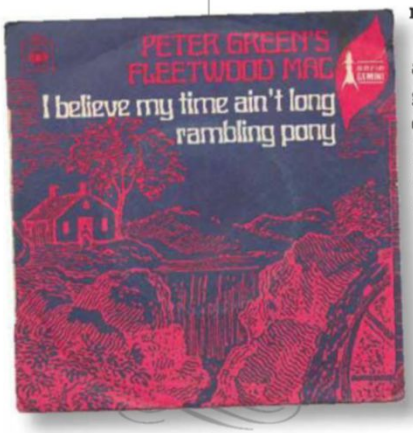
"We just got together because we both admired each other's style," he explained. "When we started out, we wanted to play more sort of down-to-earth blues and also sweet melodic blues. We didn't want to play to a brick wall."

I interpreted the last remark as meaning that they wanted chart success. "Yes, that's right," said Jerry. "That is what we hoped would come along." The group's manager, Clifford Davis, offered the news that the LP was rising higher in the charts and that it was even outselling Bob Dylan's *John Wesley Harding*.

"Outselling Dylan!" exclaimed Jerry in surprise. And he fell into silence to contemplate the thought, muttering, "No, no."

Singles success has so far eluded the group, because they have put only one release out, their version of the Elmore James classic, "Believe My Time Ain't Long".

"Did you read the reviews it got in ----------?" he asked. I answered, naturally, that I read nothing other than the *NME* (a lie of course). "It was ridiculous," Jerry continued undaunted. "They started taking it to pieces and analysing it. Now your paper and some others had good reviews. They accepted it as just another record for the pop market, which it was."



"IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT THE BLUES, YOU CANNOT PLAY OR SING THE BLUES... FORGET IT"
PETER GREEN

Clifford Davis interposed and suggested that the group had the appeal of an early Rolling Stones. I asked Jerry if he agreed. He said he did from the point of view of image. "We do have a 'couldn't care less' attitude onstage and we joke around with the audience a lot. We are very casual and there is more contact with the crowd. But if we did get big we would stay as we are. I am sure if the Stones had stuck to what they were doing, they would be much bigger now."

A new single from the group is due out on March 29. Titled "Black Magic Woman", it was written by Peter Green. Jerry describes it as commercialised blues. "It won't be a hit," said the ever honest Jerry.

"I think it will, because of the large number of fans who are buying the album," countered Clifford.

"No, it won't," Jerry retorted. The issue descended into a good-natured argument.

With the matter still unresolved, Jerry added, "I didn't play on it, you know!"

I stood back and waited for revelations of session men and ghosting. But the explanation was more simple.

"Peter wrote it and it is in his style, not mine. But the other side is mine, another Elmore James thing. 'The Sun is Shining', I play on that. But you should hear the one we have planned to follow that. It is something like Buddy Holly or Tommy Roe. "It's got a sort of 'Sheila' beat about it."

As I said, Fleetwood Mac are full of surprises.

NICK LOGAN

TAKEN FROM
MM 29/6/1968

"WE WANT PEOPLE to have a good time." says Peter Green, leader of the Fleetwood Mac whose album, *Fleetwood Mac* on the specialist Blue Horizon label, is currently doing well in the album chart. "That's why we play a few rock'n'roll numbers. It would be nice if everybody let themselves go – but they don't," adds Peter, who with the group, flew off to their first United States tour last week. Peter was having a dig at the more dedicated blues fans who stand and listen with all the solemnity of a funeral gathering.

Warming to the subject, Peter says, "We don't care about fans. We care about people and we want to make them laugh and cry. In fact we find it better to play to girls because they are not worried if you are going to play fast or slow or whether there is going to be a drum solo or a bass solo. I think that girls are more emotional."

Emotion is an important factor in listening to and playing blues thinks Peter. "Blues are blues. It doesn't matter if it's by Duster Bennett or BB King, it's emotional," he says. "If someone is singing a sad blues and it doesn't get through, forget it. But that's in the case of slow blues and you can't play slow blues all night or the audience will go to sleep. We usually play one fast one then one slow one, because this is what the band wants to do. We don't want the audience to just sit and listen."

A few weeks ago, Long John Baldry accused British blues bands of being boring. Long John's opinion was not met with sympathy by Peter. "Anyway, Long John Baldry is not a blues singer but a jazz singer. I've never heard him tell his story in anything he's sung and as far as I am concerned he's no blues singer," comments Peter.

Turning to other bands on the blues scene, Peter says, "Most of them are lifting straight from Americans. There are three groups and singers who knock me out. Duster Bennett is one. He makes up his songs as he goes along. He may take someone else's song and the first couple of lines from the original version, but the rest is all his.

"In the past, I've sung other people's songs," admits Peter, "but now I sing all my own songs onstage and the next album will be all our own songs. I used to play a lot of BB King numbers and people said that I sounded just like him. I think he is the one I sound most like."

Who were the other musicians that Peter rated? "Danny Kirwan," replies Peter. "He is really good, and Danny plays all his own material. The only other guitarist I like is John Moreshead with Aynsley Dunbar."

Another point which Peter Green feels strongly about is the definition of what is blues and what is not blues. "If I was playing what the Cream or Jimi Hendrix are playing, I wouldn't call it blues," says Peter. "There is such a sick thing about what is blues and there's all this talk about progressive blues. The blues, really, is having the blues. It is something you have and if you haven't got the blues about anything, you cannot play or sing blues, forget it. Some people think that it is just a way of playing guitar, but it isn't."

One of the first requirements for a good blues singer, says Peter, is sensitivity. "You've got to be sensitive like Duster Bennett who sings about worldly things, but most blues are about women.

Fleetwood Mac in 1968: (l-r) Fleetwood *(back)*, Spencer, Green and McVie

About nine out of ten blues are about women and not about being black."

Had Peter noticed any changes in his style of playing since he first started? "Well I've always played what I played on the *Hard Road* album with Mayall and what I play on my own LP. It's me," replies Peter. "I've become a lot more competent and I'm playing with less notes to express myself now, although I have an occasional night when I have to have a rave."

The American black man gave the world of music the blues as a musical form. Would Peter like to play to an all-black audience? "I'd like to," says Peter, "but at the moment it's so violent there you have to be known anyway. We will be playing in New York and Detroit, and I hope there that the audiences will be mixed."

TAKEN FROM
NME 3/8/1968

PUT INTO CAPSULE form, the simple philosophy of Peter Green, and his group, Fleetwood Mac, can be expressed in the most basic of four-letter Anglo-Saxon expletives known to man. This verbal two-finger sign is Mr Green and the Fleetwood's sharp retort to those, among others, who have the effrontery to call themselves blues purists, those who think the blues belongs to them alone and those who criticise the group for its appearance and language onstage. "A lot of people don't want to know about us as we're so ragged and use bad language onstage and all that, because we are ourselves onstage," said Peter Green when he dropped in on the *NME* this week.

"But I'm not going to try and be something that I'm not. If I want to say fuck, then I will, because if I say it normally in my speech then I am going to say it on stage, too, until I get arrested for it. Then I suppose I will have to stop." A forthright lad is our Peter – doesn't give you none of that "Yeah, that's great, and all that?!!?" as he would put it.

A few days earlier, the Mac had returned from a highly successful tour of America to find their first album in its 22nd week in the *NME* LP chart – a considerable feat for a group that has never had a single hit. "Yeah, fantastic. I'm absolutely knocked out," is a quote you might expect from anybody else. But not from Peter Green. Shake of the curly black hair, shrug of the shoulders and: "If it's in the chart, great, if it's not, tough!"

How was America? "Great, I want to go back," he answered, allowing himself a smile. "When we were good, the audience were good, but when we were bad, like a few nights we didn't play as well as we could, then we didn't go down. In England we can go down well on an off night."

Were their audiences pop fans or the purist element? "Oh no, there's not the same sort of thing over there. It's not like taken as a form of music as it is over here. It's always been there. Like people think if you're playing wailing strings and bending, then it's blues – but that's a lot of rubbish.

"That's not blues, at all. I mean, just because you're a blues band, it doesn't mean you are going to play blues numbers all night. We don't, we do some rocking numbers, as well.

"Purists? There are no purists out there, sick people like that. Purists have got no idea. They're taking it like 'This is our thing', but it's everybody's thing. I'm singing out the blues. This 'stand and listen' bit – they don't do that over there. You say something and it gets through to them and they shout back and let you know it.

"For me, LA was fantastic. They couldn't care less what guitars we were playing, what strings I used and all that load of crap. Me, I like to sing the blues to people who don't know anything about it. Don't know the band, have never seen the band. Because they will get the message much better than people who are waiting to see how fast I'm gonna play. In America, when they go out, they go to have a good time. If their good time is had by just listening and sitting that's OK, but surely the majority are out to let themselves go."

The second Fleetwood Mac LP is released by Blue Horizon through CBS this month and the group wanted to call it 'A Good Length', which seems in character. CBS thought that sounded obscene, revealed Peter, so now it will be titled *Mr Wonderful*. What can fans expect? "It's more as we are now, as we would play onstage. On the first LP I used harmonica a lot, but I don't play harmonica at all onstage. There's a lot of other people on it, like Stan Webb and Christine Perfect (both of Chicken Shack) on my tracks."

Saxes are used on some tracks, too and that, coupled with the fact that strings are heard on the current Mac single, "Need Your Love So Bad", will probably further irritate the purists.

"We've had no criticisms or protests yet," said Peter. "I'm glad, because I don't want to know about any of that! So many people say we should do that or do this. They say, 'Why do you do the same old thing?' Other people worried about us going commercial. The fact is, if you've got something to sing the blues about, you play it. That's the thing. If I'm suddenly very happy and leading a great life then I can't sing the blues any more. Really what I call blues and what they call blues is a different thing. They call 'Shake Your Moneymaker' blues. Well, that's not blues to me. It's just a rock'n'roll song. And even any uptempo number that isn't sad. A blues should be sad. That's the whole idea. It's someone telling their sad story. Sometimes you can get that feeling. Other times you just sing the song. But I can't write numbers if I don't feel that way." ***NICK LOGAN***

CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE

RELEASE DATE 24 FEBRUARY 1968

FLEETWOOD MAC

In the high summer of British psychedelia, a ruggedly unpretentious blues band begin their improbable adventure. Got to move!

BY NEIL SPENCER

THE SEETHING CRUCIBLE of 1967's British music scene crystallised many exotic delights: The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper*, Cream's *Disraeli Gears*, Hendrix's "Third Stone From The Sun", the arrival of Procol Harum, Fairport Convention and more.

The formation of Fleetwood Mac, a group destined to become one of British pop's greatest successes, was neither exotic nor unexpected. Indeed, among the King's Road finery of rock's elite and its Afghan coats, perms and 'taches, alongside the quest to venture ever further into the expanding cosmos of psychedelia, Fleetwood Mac arrived as the champions of anti-psych, a lodestone of authenticity.

As much was clear on their debut at the 1967 Windsor Jazz & Blues Festival, where the group's downbeat, denim-clad garb had more in common with the festival crowd than with fellow performers like Arthur Brown, The Nice or The Move. Their music was likewise unpretentious and accessible; seven cuts of spiky blues, led by Jeremy Spencer's swaggering Elmore James impressions, but defined by Peter Green's poised guitar and vocals on his own "The World Keeps On Turning". The band went down a storm.

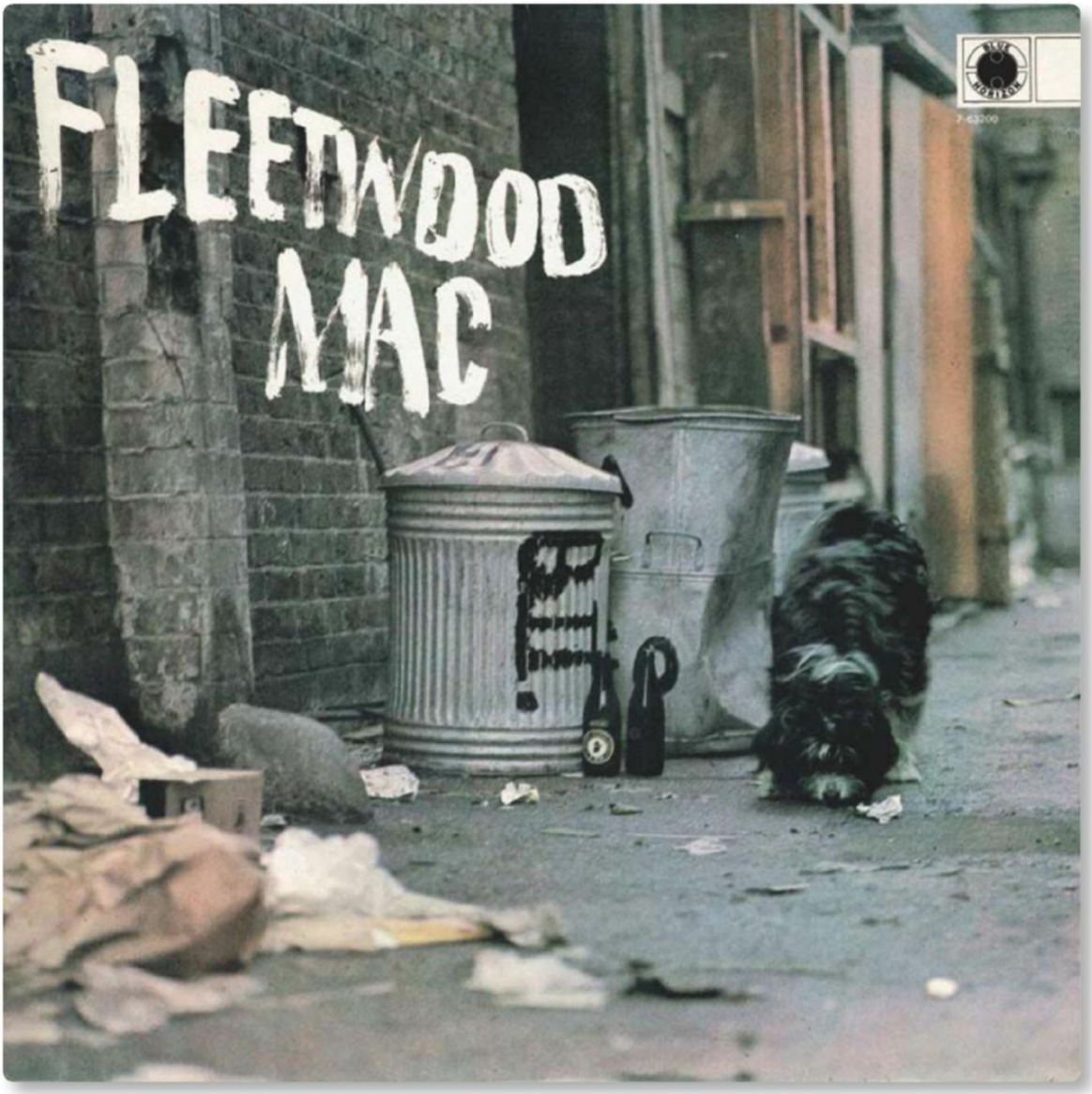
> SOME OFF-YOUR-SEAT RAZZMATAZZ, SOME 12-BAR MISERY, AND SOME LEAD GUITAR DAZZLE!

The Mac's good time/bad time electric blues, along with a dollop of rock'n'roll, were crowdpleasers live, which helps explain how the group's debut album, initially unsupported by any single, spent the best part of a year on the UK charts. There were other reasons. Green and McVie had both served an apprenticeship with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers (as had Mick Fleetwood, briefly), but with Mayall now turning his attention to a more jazzy sound, the Mac's formation made perfect sense. As Eric Clapton, Green's predecessor in Mayall's band, was now elevated to velvet-clad rock god with Cream, Green was rightly seen as the inheritor of Clapton's mantle as the poster boy of British blues.

There was an awful lot of Brit blues on offer, but from the start, the Mac were a class apart from toilers like Chicken Shack, Alvin Lee's Ten Years After, The Groundhogs, or even the Mick Taylor-era Bluesbreakers. In 20-year-old Peter Green they had arguably the finest guitarist of his generation, one whose dazzling playing and supple vocals were not ersatz Chicago blues, but came with a soul all their own. That became searingly clear with the release of the Mac's single, "Black Magic Woman", in March 1968, a masterpiece later made famous (though not bettered) by Santana, and which while not on *Fleetwood Mac*, contributed to the album's success.

The group's coalescence owed something to Mike Vernon, formerly Mayall's producer, who was starting his label Blue Horizon, and who offered a simpático entrée into recording an album. With the group reprising much of their live set for the record, the sessions for *Fleetwood Mac* were completed without fuss in a mere three weeks. The record arrived in a sleeve that was already a cliché; a rubbish-strewn back alley, signifying that inside was real, down'n'dirty blues.

The promise was only half kept. Paying homage to black American heroes was always a perilous path for white Englishmen, whether the genre was blues, soul or jazz, the challenge being to transmute (as did The Beatles and the



CRITICS' VERDICT

"Committed blues with the music kept at white-heat intensity. Highly recommended."

MELODY MAKER, MARCH 2, 1968

"I wondered where the early Animals and Stones music had gone... well here it is. I loved the bluesy, jazzy group, with either Peter Green or Jeremy Spencer taking vocals and supplying – along with Mick Fleetwood on drums, and John McVie on bass – pulsating instrumentals."

ALLEN EVANS, NME, FEBRUARY 24, 1968

Stones at their best) rather than merely imitate. For all that Jeremy Spencer's brash slide guitar rocked a live audience, on vinyl it was clumsy stuff compared to his inspiration, Elmore James. The terse dynamics of James' "Shake Your Moneymaker" became a heads-down boogie, opener "My Heart Beat Like A Hammer" is simply James' "Dust My Broom" in another guise, with "Cold Black Night" another variant. James' "Got To Move" was definitely one track too much from the exuberant slidemeister. For all that Spencer sprinkled "*Oh yeahs*" into the mix, his noisy vocals were likewise a limited approximation of what he'd garnered from his record collection – though, to be fair, he was merely near the front of a very long line.

With Green it was a different story. The East Ender had already absorbed the tropes of the blues, to which his own sensibilities were adding a magic that flickered on his share of *Fleetwood Mac*, where group politics dictated that material be split between him and Spencer. Fêted for his guitar playing, his vocals were just as important; soft, sorrowful and unmannered (recognisably not American), they animated the slow 12-bar "Merry Go Round" as much as his spiky guitar. Likewise "Long Grey Mare", a piece of sexual innuendo that was derived from Albert King's "Crosscut Saw" and where Green exhibited a decent harmonica technique. "Looking For Somebody" also puts Green's harp stage centre alongside some nicely tortured vocals, though his guitar is mystifyingly absent. "Hellhound On My Trail", an obligatory nod to Robert Johnson at a time when the long lost bluesman was a totemic calling card, was played out chiefly against none-too-special piano from Spencer. Howling Wolf's "Got No Place To Go" inevitably lacked the vocal might of the original, but showed McVie and Fleetwood's firm grasp of blues dynamics; unshowy but constantly humming.

The album's stand-out is "I Loved Another Woman", a Green composition that was a precursor to "Black Magic Woman" with a Latinate rhythm, longing vocals and a shimmering, almost spectral, guitar part. Green's "The World Keep On Turning" is a solo showcase, picked out on acoustic guitar in country blues style with brief, dazzling intermediate parts and a disarmingly easy vocal that might have come from an old Charley Patton 78.

Fleetwood Mac was no perfect statement of British blues, and its producer might usefully have insisted on less Jeremy Spencer and more Peter Green, but it was a convincing showcase of the new band's talents. Most importantly, it accorded with what a growing army of homegrown blues fans wanted; some off-your-seat razzmatazz, some 12-bar misery, and some lead guitar dazzle. The Mac were on their long, tortuous way.

TRACKMARKS — FLEETWOOD MAC

1. My Heart Beat Like A Hammer ★★★
2. Merry Go Round ★★★
3. Long Grey Mare ★★★★
4. Hellhound On My Trail ★★★
5. Shake Your Moneymaker ★★
6. Looking For Somebody ★★★★
7. No Place To Go ★★★
8. My Baby's Good To Me ★★★
9. I Loved Another Woman ★★★★
10. Cold Black Night ★★
11. The World Keep On Turning ★★★★
12. Got To Move ★★

Label: Blue Horizon
Produced: Mike Vernon
Recorded: CBS Studios, London
Personnel: Peter Green (guitar, harmonica, vocals), Jeremy Spencer (guitar, piano, vocals), Mick Fleetwood (drums), John McVie (bass), Bob Brunning (bass "...Mare")
Highest chart position: UK 4; US 198

RELEASE DATE 23 AUGUST 1968

MR WONDERFUL

A rapid, rushed and not-so-wonderful follow-up. How much longer can a young blues band keep messing around?

BY TOM PINNOCK

THOUGH HE WOULD pose resplendent and sophisticated on the cover of *Rumours* eight years later, Mick Fleetwood cut quite a different figure on the sleeve of his band's second album. Visibly crazed, the drummer is pictured naked except for some strategically placed foliage, and accompanied by a toy dog and an especially creepy doll.

Stranger still, this was an image chosen by a band eagerly seeking to capitalise on the surprising commercial success of their debut, that February's *Fleetwood Mac* (later known as *Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac*), which had reached an impressive No 4 on the UK chart. Just over a month after this placing, the quartet released the expansive "Black Magic Woman" single. Written by Green, the song took the blues structures of their debut and hung them over a framework of eerie guitar and off-kilter rhythms. The yearning, string-laden blues of "Need Your Love So Bad", originally written by Mertis John Jr and most famously performed by Little Willie John in 1955, followed in summer 1968.

> THE WORK OF A BAND FORCED TO CHURN OUT PRODUCT WHEN THEY LACKED INSPIRATION

For their follow-up proper, however, the Mac decided to shy away from such sublime aural advances and play it straight – slapdash, even. Returning to London's CBS Studio, where they had recorded their debut album, they tracked completely live in just four days, even processing vocals through the PA system that they used for their live work. This approach might have accurately captured their stage performances, but it also gave *Mr Wonderful* a raw and unpleasantly thin sound, with vocals weak and distant, guitars dry and uncomfortably close, and drums merely a far-off pitter-patter.

Like their debut album, *Mr Wonderful* is split between Green originals (here all credits are shared with CG Adams, a pseudonym for the band's manager Clifford Davis), and those helmed by slide-guitarist Jeremy Spencer, which include two blues standards by his idol, Elmore James.

Despite the inferior sound quality, things start off well. Green's "Stop Messin' Round" is a strong opener, boasting angular, biting guitar leads, lithe piano and honking saxophones. It's followed by Spencer's more anguished, yet still swinging "I've Lost My Baby", led by his slide guitar and overdriven vocals.

Yet as the album progresses, it soon becomes apparent that the group lacked the breadth, and indeed quality, of material to fill two sides of 12" vinyl so soon after making their debut. Of course, the primitive recording doesn't help matters, but a stunning lack of variety is the main problem – indeed, four of Spencer's cuts are practically indistinguishable for at least the first 20 seconds, kicking off with the same Elmore James-inspired slide riff and then bounding straight into swinging boogie rhythms pretty much identical in tempo and key.

For much of the album, the arrangements appear to have been put together with as much haste as the recordings, each song topped with buzzing saxophones playing in wearing unison. Even before their myriad lineup changes, the unit was already dysfunctional too: neither Green or Spencer play on each other's songs here, with the space instead filled by piano, provided on Green's songs by John McVie's girlfriend Christine Perfect, then the keyboardist in Chicken Shack, and by Spencer himself in a more robust, R'n'B mode on the songs that he helms. This was Perfect's first

CRITICS' VERDICT

"Deep, exciting blues sounds come from the group again on this latest LP, with plenty of evidence of Peter Green's guitar work; Jeremy Spencer's slide guitar and piano, John McVie's throbbing bass, and Mick Fleetwood's rock-steady drumming."

ALLEN EVANS, NME, AUGUST 31, 1968

"'Safe line' unadventurous British blues that seems rather dull after recent albums by Ten Years After and the Cream."

MELODY MAKER, SEPTEMBER 7, 1968

appearance on a Fleetwood Mac record, but certainly not her last.

Through the haze of uptempo boogie-blues that makes up the majority of *Mr Wonderful*, there are some gems, though, mostly mined by Peter Green. "Love That Burns" is a slow, despairing blues, prefiguring the darkness that would soon envelop the guitarist. As usual, his playing is exemplary, subtle and sorrowful, and for once the saxophones, bending woozily in the background, fit the mood perfectly. Green's closer, "Trying So Hard To Forget", is also a low-key triumph, a sparse acoustic piece that wallows gleefully in the blues.

Ultimately, though, *Mr Wonderful* is very much the work of a band forced, for commercial reasons, to churn out product when they were audibly and – if the cover is anything to go by – visibly, lacking in inspiration. It's an old-fashioned album in that regard, having more to do with the canny industry wiles of the mid-'60s than the brave new world of expansive music, expensive recordings and progressive blues pioneered at the time by the likes of Hendrix, latter-day Yardbirds and Cream. For now, Fleetwood Mac were swinging, certainly, but also standing still.

Before all that, however, came *English Rose*, ostensibly the US version of *Mr Wonderful*. Released in January 1969, it's a much more attractive proposition than the original album – if one ignores the horrific cover shot of a gurning Mick Fleetwood in drag, caked in make-up.

Half of *Mr Wonderful* is here, including highlights "Stop Messin' Round" and "Love That Burns", along with contemporary A-sides "Black Magic Woman" and "Albatross", the latter a UK No 1, and a handful of other rarities. Included here are also two tracks that would appear on the forthcoming *Then Play On* album, "Without You" and "One Sunny Day", both written by new guitarist Danny Kirwan. The presence of the fresh-faced 18-year-old, who made his first Fleetwood Mac appearance on "Albatross", would dramatically change the sound of the group, now stretched out to a more fluid, three-guitar lineup.

English Rose is a strong set, then, and evidence of how impressive *Mr Wonderful* could have been if the band had been given the time and space to grow after the success of their first album.

With their next long-player, though, Peter Green would finally raise the band up to the adventurous heights of their peers, and out – too far out, perhaps – to the furthest reaches of psychedelic blues.

Soon, Mick Fleetwood's unnervingly rabid stare on the front cover of the *Mr Wonderful* sleeve would come to seem a little too prophetic.

TRACKMARKS — MR WONDERFUL

1. Stop Messin' Round ★★★
2. I've Lost My Baby ★★★
3. Rollin' Man ★★★
4. Dust My Broom ★★
5. Love That Burns ★★★★
6. Doctor Brown ★★
7. Need Your Love Tonight ★★★
8. If You Be My Baby ★★
9. Evenin' Boogie ★★
10. Lazy Poker Blues ★★
11. Coming Home ★★
12. Trying So Hard To Forget ★★★

Label: Blue Horizon
Produced: Mike Vernon
Recorded: CBS Studios, London

Personnel: Peter Green (vocals, guitar, harmonica), Jeremy Spencer (vocals, slide guitar, piano), John McVie (bass guitar), Mick Fleetwood (drums), Christine Perfect (keyboards, piano, vocals), Duster Bennett (harmonica), Steve Gregory, Dave Howard (alto saxophone), Johnny Almond, (tenor saxophone), Roland Vaughan (tenor saxophone)
Highest chart position: UK 10; US n/a

"We've never done what was expected!"

1969 dawns, and with it "Albatross", a first No 1 for the Mac. **NICK LOGAN** hears from Peter Green about astonishing American adventures: floods, meetings with blues legends, hassle from both cops and gangsters. Then he joins the band — and Christine Perfect — in the studio, as *Then Play On* begins to take shape.

The Mac in '69: *(l-r)* Green *(lying down)*, McVie, Spencer, Fleetwood and Kirwan

TAKEN FROM MM 1/2/1969

FEARS FOR THE safety of Fleetwood Mac in the floods that caused havoc and many deaths in California earlier this week weren't exactly alleviated by the international operator telling me that they might have difficulty getting the *NME*'s Tuesday evening call through to the group at their Los Angeles hotel because the cable was wet and in a bad way.

Expressing much anxiety here in London on Tuesday was the Fleetwood's manager Cliff Davis, who was also trying to get a call through to them and their publicist Valerie Bond who, to relieve the concern, cracked: "I'm sure they'll be OK. Bad pennies always turn up."

First there was a wrong number which got a rather annoyed Californian lady out of bed and then on to the line came the sleepy voice of Peter Green on his bedside phone.

"Floods? No they didn't bother us," said Peter after a lengthy yawn, "except that it's been raining solidly for days. It didn't really affect the cities, though it slowed the traffic right down and some of the roads were closed."

I offered my congratulations on their first No 1 hit with "Albatross". "It hasn't quite sunk in yet," said Peter. "There's nothing really happening here in the way that it is in England, so perhaps that is why. It could well have flopped. I wrote it on a plane when I got the first three notes and I thought they were incredibly good, so I took it from there.

"I never wrote it with anything in mind, but it would probably have been an LP track. I thought it had turned out very good when we had recorded it and we were all so pleased with it that I wanted to do it as a single. Everyone else agreed."

Peter said the group hadn't celebrated yet. "We are still waiting to celebrate Christmas," he laughed, "We'll wait until we get home. The whole band can't wait to get back. We all miss our friends very much."

The Mac's follow-up single, Peter revealed, will be a track recorded in New York called "Man Of The World". Peter wrote it and sings it. "It's in the same vein as 'Albatross', very sad," he explained.

Would it, like "Albatross", be a change from what we have come to expect so far from the bluesy Fleetwoods?

"Well I don't really care," said Peter, yawning again. "I never have done, really. We've never done what was expected of Fleetwood Mac – we've always done the opposite. We just do what we want to do. We are not worried about people saying that we have gone commercial either. We still play the same stuff onstage, and just add the hit numbers like 'Albatross'. It's good, because that makes the whole act more interesting and the hits provide a balance for more raw stuff.

"But we are not going to go completely one way. We are not going to go over to hit numbers in the same way that we are not going to go completely over to 12-bar numbers.

"The tour so far is going great," continued Peter. "The only thing that's a drag is the in-between factor, the travelling, etc. The young people generally are fantastic and that includes the groups. I was impressed with Taj Mahal. Grateful Dead we've met but haven't seen play yet.

"Janis Joplin sat in with us at the Fillmore West. She was sat listening on the edge of the stage, and our road manager, who didn't know who she was, pushed her forward. It was great because it was

> "I WROTE 'ALBATROSS' ON A PLANE, WHEN I GOT THE FIRST THREE NOTES"
> PETER GREEN

ARALDO DI CROLLALANZA/REX

the end of the night and we were all raving and having a great time. I also saw Albert Collins who was playing with us at the Fillmore. He is in the Buddy Guy, Albert King class and he was about the only one of that kind I had yet to hear live."

Besides recording the single in New York, the group also went into the Chess Studios in Chicago and recorded what could be a double album. Invited on to the session were such blues greats as Willie Dixon, Shakey Horton and Otis Spann, and Buddy Guy also dropped in for a play.

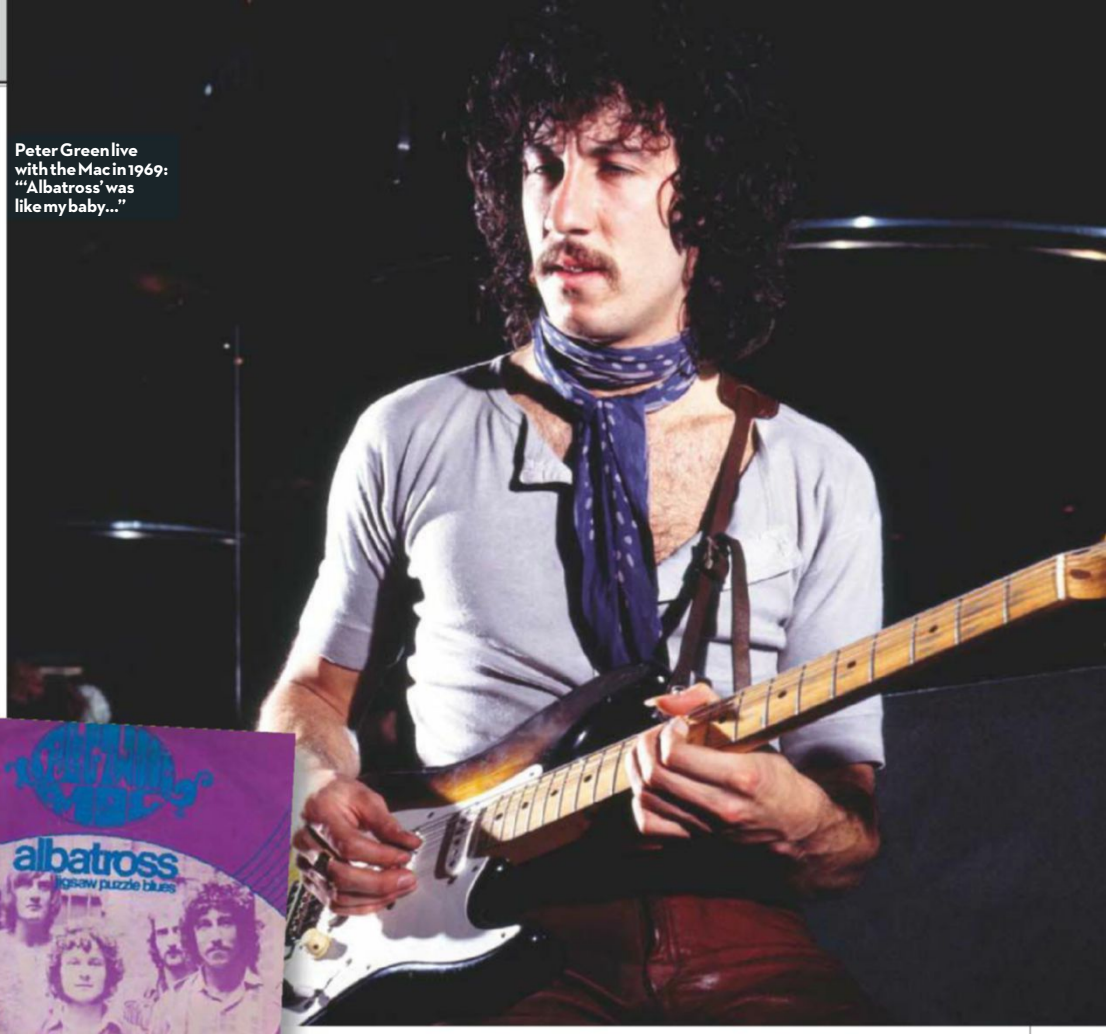
"Most of the bluesmen in Chicago are really hard up," said Peter, "I would have thought they'd have had money, but a lot of them are really down and out. Willie Dixon is like a father figure of the blues, but every day he phones his agent for work but can't get hardly anything. It's very sad."

I said it was ironic that while the coloured bluesmen there were hard put to earn a living, a white blues band like the Mac could go to the States and get good money.

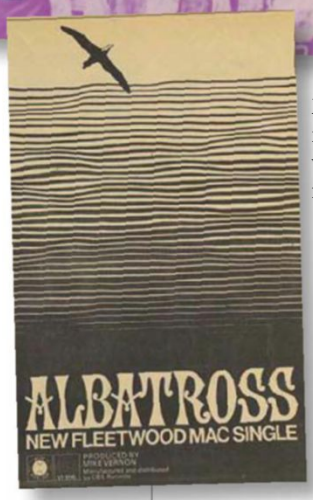
"Yes," said Peter sadly. "It is very ironic."

An amusing fact that I only learnt this week was that the Fleetwoods' "Albatross" film clip they made for *Top Of The Pops* was not made in Cornwall as I had thought, but was filmed on the roof of the CBS offices in London! It seems that the Cornwall trip had to be cancelled because Peter had the flu and a photograph of his face was put onto a film of the other four at CBS, interspersed with genuine sea shots.

"Give my regards to everyone in England." Peter signed off, and I left him to go back to sleep. He probably thought it was all a bad dream!



Peter Green live with the Mac in 1969: "'Albatross' was like my baby..."



TAKEN FROM
NME 22/2/1969

WHITE-FACED IN a framework of jet black curls, Peter Green has the look of either a saintly devil or a devilish saint. I suspect there's a bit of both in the Fleetwood Mac leader born in Alf Garnett-land at Bethnal Green, East London. The first time I met him was at the *NME* offices and the impression he left was of someone continually on his guard, aggressive and taciturn, virtually defying you to like him.

A more recent meeting was on Monday. Still there is the hint of satanic aggression and the nonchalant don't-give-a-damn attitude that is to be admired, but Mr Green is now a changed man, immediately likeable, more friendly and less suspicious. Nowadays he doesn't have to 'hawk' Fleetwood Mac around to get publicity: the journalists are the ones eager to see him and perhaps therein lies the clue to the change.

Monday's meeting was on home territory – home being a house called Albatross in suburban New Malden, Surrey. Peter bought it for his parents who, out of pride while he was away, gave it its name and erected the metal replica of the Mac's No 1 bird [*Albatross*] that hangs over the front door.

A Mr Green in faded blue denims with a hole at one knee was there to greet me and show me into a back room filled with the strains of "All You Need Is Love", stuffed animals' heads that glowered down from the walls, a parrot and a budgie that squawked at each other from their separate cages and where Peter's girlfriend squatted before the open fire sewing badges onto a decrepit black canvas 'Hells Angels'-type jacket. The latter was a gift to Peter from a friend who took it off a member of the Rogues' motorcycle gang in Chicago.

"These guys would rather lose their lives than lose their jackets," he explained, "They are dishonoured for life if they do so."

As I conjured up an image of a poor dishonoured Rogue treading the lonely windswept streets of Chicago in search of his lost jacket, Peter pulled up a leather rhinoceros and invited me to take a seat.

"I felt as if I was lying when I was onstage announcing that Fleetwood Mac was No 1," said Peter as we got on talking about the US tour. "It didn't seem true being so far away. The group really found a home from home in hotel rooms over there. We got on to discussing a lot of things like life and death and it brought us all much closer together. Now I feel like I have a religion. I believe in God now. This is what I am reading now," he said, suddenly producing several books from a nearby shelf, among them the thoughts of Confucius and a couple on Buddhism.

Peter put on a tape of one of Fleetwood's dates in Detroit and there was much hilarity over Jeremy Spencer's hilarious Elvis Presley impersonations, which nearly always verge on the obscene.

"He really lives those characters: he really believes he is Elvis Presley," said Peter, before recounting the story of the night in Sacramento when they nearly got hauled off to jail on obscenity charges. Fortunately the cops were content to give Peter and Jeremy a ticking off in the street outside the club. Apart from that brush with the law and the floods which caused havoc and death in Los Angeles during their stay, there were two other incidents on the tour that Peter will remember for the rest of his life. On both he might have lost it!

One was the night he and an American girlfriend fled from a New York club pursued by a gangster with a grudge against the girl and a desire to shorten poor Mr Green's life span. How they holed up in the hotel with what they thought to be the gang hammering on the door outside and turned out to be the rest of the group makes humorous listening, told in vivid detail by Peter from the safety of suburban New Malden.

"Danny was asleep in the next room." Peter recalled. "I had two knives with me and I took one in to him. He was shaking like this inside the blanket and saying, 'Please tell me it's a joke.' I was shaking too but only inside. I didn't have time to explain, I just babbled on about being sorry to involve him."

One of the reasons why, perhaps, according to

CHRIS WALTER/PHOTOFEATURES.COM

Peter, Danny went to the States a boy and came back a man!

"It may seem funny to look back at it now, but that was the most frightening time I have ever spent in my life. These guys really are hard criminals and it's a bit of a shock when you realise you are mixed up in the New York underworld."

The second memorable incident, also fraught with danger, happened when Peter ventured into Chicago's notorious South Side district to play a solo spot at Pepper's Lounge before an all-black audience. His companions there were bluesmen Willie Dixon and Muddy Waters, but even then it was a tenuous kind of safety.

"That is their whole territory, the South Side," said Peter. "That is all they have left after being pushed by the white man, and any white who walks the streets there is dead. If you can't play, in a place like that they are just waiting to let you know. I could feel the whole attention of the club on me and they were all clapping and shouting at the end. I was feeling so high, so proud after the performance. It was a lifelong ambition of mine to play before an all-black audience."

Peter put on the Cream's *Goodbye* album he brought home from the States and then played me "Man Of The World", the track he wrote and sings and which will probably be their follow-up single. It has the same dreamy quality of "Albatross" and the makings of another hit.

"It is definitely a blues," he commented when it finished. "But people won't think it is, because they won't have heard a blues in that sequence before. "We are not trying to get away from doing the blues or get away from doing anything. We are just trying to broaden our field of music. I can guarantee that there will never be a night in Fleetwood Mac's history when they don't do at least one slow blues and at least one Elmore James number, and I am exaggerating that."

I asked him how he felt about the tag "New Stones" that had been endowed on Fleetwood Mac. "I like it," was the reply, "Because if Fleetwood Mac can at least touch on what the Stones used to do, then I'd be happy. The name Stones just glows for me; it is electric. I have the greatest admiration for the Stones. I see Fleetwood Mac as a lifetime thing because we are more than a group, we are five people. I'm not boasting, but we are five very electric people and very powerful. We have strong views on everything.

"Everyone in the band has been a very sad and disturbed person at some time in their lives and because of that they can now know a lot of happiness. No-one has any illusions or delusions. No-one thinks they are great, but they know what they can do. We have this incredible humour thing between us, which Jeremy is the root of and we are all in on it. It is like a closed shop to outsiders. If any one of us started getting a bit flash, the others would bring him down. It is a great thing to have. It just keeps everyone in touch and no-one is allowed to get any big ideas."

Finally, the inevitable question – and Peter was waiting for it. Have Fleetwood Mac gone commercial? "We always were commercial. A commercial group to me is one that sells. The next question will be, are you going to stop playing the blues? The answer is that I play and do what I like."

That's what makes him likeable.

A DISHEVELLED PETER Green, looking like a dropout cricket umpire in an almost coat-length white cardigan, was sitting next to a blonde girlfriend, Sandra, offering round a bag of nuts. The 6ft 6in beanpole frame of the Mac's tame giant Mick Fleetwood shook to the music like an electric octopus. John McVie was quietly impersonating Fu Manchu.

In contrast, Danny Kirwan was a blur of action, leaping from control room to studio, showing not a trace of the shyness he used to be renowned for. Jeremy Spencer was, to coin a phrase, absent.

"Fun with the Mac," observed Peter drily, for my benefit, "Write that down."

"Mick's a laugh," suggested Mick.

We were in a basement recording studio off Holborn Kingsway where Fleetwood Mac were cutting their third LP. It will, Peter informed me, be totally different from anything they've done on albums before. For a start, all the tracks will be new numbers with the writing honours shared by Messrs Green and Kirwan. In addition, they are producing it themselves. The track taking their current attention was a composition of Danny's, which accounted for his earnest attention and exuberance.

"The ones we have yet to go on are really creative," observed Peter. "The last album, *Mr Wonderful*, was sort of rock blues. No real ideas, just feel. This one is mainly ideas, coupled with the same feel. Like I did in 'Albatross' and 'Man Of The World'. I have been quite happy rock-a-bluesing, but there are just things in me that have to get out.

"A big step? No, not for people who have followed us through *Mr Wonderful*, 'Albatross' and 'Man Of The World'."

Is it still blues? "I only call a blues a sad song. A sad song sung with feeling is a blues to me," answered Peter. "Anything else is not. I would not call 'Stop Messing Around' a blues. That was rock'n'roll. But we still love playing rock'n'roll. We like to have some fun. We don't want to be too serious."

> "IT'S A BIT OF A SHOCK WHEN YOU REALISE YOU ARE MIXED UP IN THE NEW YORK UNDERWORLD"
> PETER GREEN

Peter bit into an apple while Sandra peeled and offered round raw carrots. The group asked me to put the record straight over a piece on the *NME* news page last week stating that Jeremy Spencer was impersonating the Cream on the new EP being released with the new LP.

It is apparently not the Cream that Jeremy impersonates; the information was wrongly relayed to the *NME* by the Fleetwood Mac office and the group was horrified to read it.

"We are all great fans of the Cream," said Peter, "They are just too fucking good to think we could impersonate them," added Mick. The record is hereby straightened.

"I think it's time to go get some goodies," proclaimed Mick, who was splayed out on his seat with a plimsolled foot in each corner of the room.

"No, you don't, Fleetwood," ordered Peter. "You stay here and starve and rot. That's how you get the blues. Print that."

"Write to Mick Fleetwood for three easy stages of bankruptcy," said Mick suddenly, observing the tear in his ancient blue jeans where an expanse of knee was on show. Mick is on stage three.

Fun with the Mac was temporarily interrupted by the arrival of Christine Perfect, which woke John McVie from his quietude and the couple swapped cigarettes and husband-and-wife talk.

There was an exodus of Fleetwood Mac to the studio, an impassioned plea over the speakers from Mr Green – "Where's me plectrum?" – and at the next break Peter and I sat down and talked.

Did he think the new LP might lose them fans? "I think we are going to gain a lot more," he replied defiantly. "We may have lost followers with 'Man' and 'Albatross' because they were not real followers. Just people who say they like the blues. But I don't really want to lose anybody. I want people just to follow us as people.

"We give ourselves all the time. We say just exactly what is going on and how we feel. People should know us individually as people. If I follow a group, it doesn't matter what they do. Unless they go completely to pot... or perhaps I should say off the rails. We just want to do everything we can do. I am into so many different things that people just don't realise. We just want to scrape a lot of different aspects of music. I am not going to stick in one vein; not going to revert to the old days."

The beginnings of 'Man Of The World' go a long way back, nearly a year and a half. "I got the phrase '*Shall I tell you about my life*' in my mind," said Peter. "Then at a different time I wrote the bit in the middle. All the bits came together. That's the way I write.

"Our intention was to release what was best for the general public – what is generally known as a commercial hit. We want hits same as anybody else. Why else do people put out singles? If this one isn't successful – and I know it must be, because of the sales figures – if it died a death, I would be a bit choked.

"'Albatross' gave me a lot of faith in the public, because that was a great number. 'Albatross' was like my baby. I was proud of it. It will be around when I am dead. Obviously when you get a No 1 it is like a great injection in you. When I made 'Man Of The World', I believed in it that much I thought it might do it."

GETTY IMAGES

"I get a schoolboy pleasure from shocking people"

The Mac in 1969, LA: *(l-r)* McVie, Kirwan, Fleetwood, Green and Spencer

As Fleetwood Mac become established, the oddball characters in the band begin to reveal themselves. **NICK LOGAN** profiles all five members... Who collects dismembered Victorian dolls and penis-shaped rings? Who drinks "too much — but not as much as I used to"? And whose powerful religious belief seems to be drawing him away from music?

TAKEN FROM NME 31/5/1969

MICK FLEETWOOD LIKES shocking and frightening people. Heads and limbs of Victorian dolls adorn his Ealing flat. On his hand he wears a large carved ring he had specially made in the shape of the male organs. He's the giant of the Fleetwood Mac, skinny with hair as long and as straight as a girl's and giraffe-like movements that emphasise his freakish build and leave the impression that he is continually sending himself up.

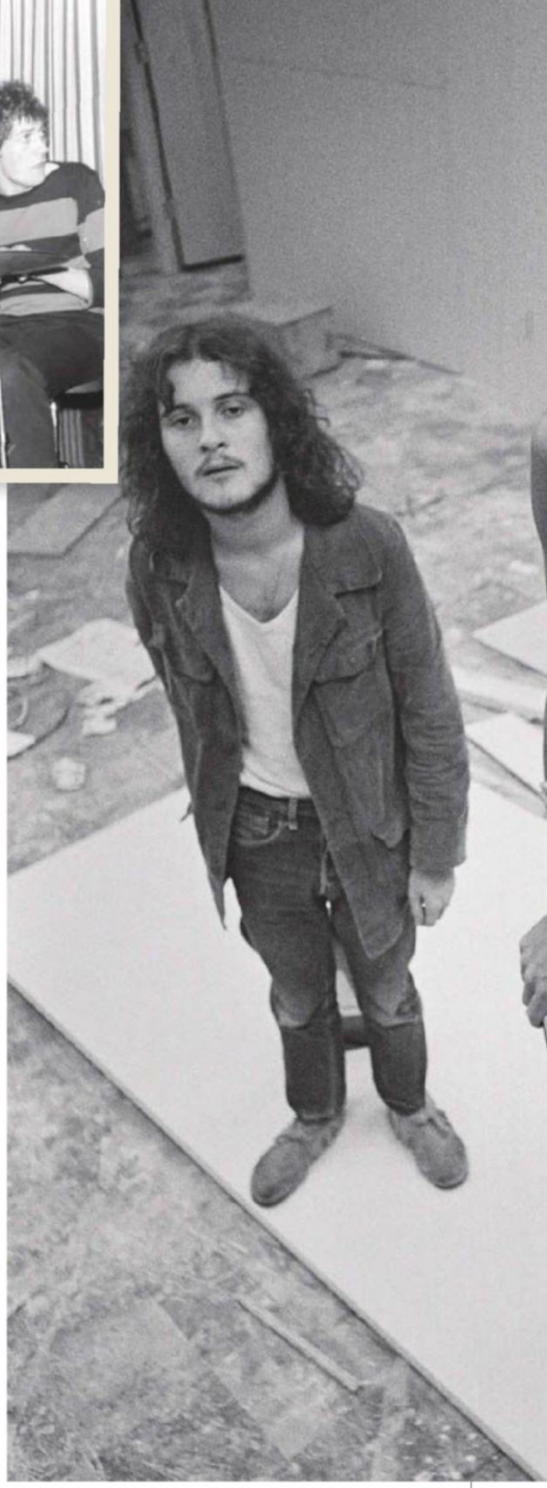
If he wanted to lessen the effect he could have his hair cut short and dress by conservative standards, but the fact that his appearance might provoke laughter and rude remarks doesn't perturb him in the least. He has never worried about his height – never went home when he was young and tried to saw his legs down – and you get the impression that he likes to provoke people by his looks.

It should be obvious that Fleetwood is a born exhibitionist as will already be known to those who have seen his contribution to the front of the *Mr Wonderful* LP sleeve, and the American-only *English Rose* LP on which he appears in drag looking absolutely grotesque. The only drawback due to his height is that strangers think he is aloof when he enters a room – an attitude which quickly changes when you get on the same level with him and engage him in what will be a witty and lively conversation.

Mick likes talking, likes meeting people, and is the kind of person you could go to and confide in. His penchant for frightening people goes back to his childhood, but he adds that it was never allowed to go beyond the point of where it became malicious. Neither is the Fleetwood Mac humour now.

"I get a schoolboy pleasure from shocking people," he says. "I collect erotic jewellery and other erotica and those Victorian dolls that were made to be beautiful but are very frightening to adults. "It is a kink but I get pleasure from it in a very unkinky way. To me it's like a schoolboyish giggle. Other people might think there is something wrong with me, but there is not. Jerry would understand completely."

Green and Fleetwood with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers in 1967



We talked during a break from Fleetwood Mac recording at a Holborn studio. Mick is not a technical drummer – he doesn't think 'drums' 24 hours a day and never practises.

"I don't rate myself as a drummer," he confesses, "I'm just a useful drummer, just a person who leaps on drums and starts playing. But I do enjoy playing a great deal."

Mick's greatest enjoyment from the band, however, comes from merely being with the other four. "I can't think of any other people I'd rather be with and everyone else in the group feels that way."

Born in Cornwall, the son of a Wing Commander in the Air force, Mick travelled with his parents to Egypt, Malaya and Norway as a child. From the ages of nine to 15 he was put into a boarding school because of the effect travelling might have on his education. The school was Windlesham House, near Hastings. Education is one of Mick's favourite talking points, being strongly against the system used to impart knowledge, particularly in boarding schools.

It was the system that failed him – he realised he was intelligent but the way of teaching struck a "complete blank" in his mind. He decided to leave school at 15. His parents had always let him make his own decisions, and this is something he says he is very grateful for.

He came to London without educational qualifications and went to live with his sister, decorating her flat as a means of earning a living.

Living in the same mews was Pete Bardens of Shotgun Express fame whom Mick became friendly with. Ray Davies was then playing with Bardens, and Mick and Dave Davies would go along to watch.

Mick bought a drum kit and joined a group of five, earning £9 a week between them. In Mick's words: "After that I passed through a succession of groups and crooked managers who promised us stardom."

He has a fund of hilarious stories to tell of how he was in groups that were earning little but were promoted as if they were in star acts. There was the manager who took them up to play in the Cavern in a hired Austin Princess, where they died a terrible death.

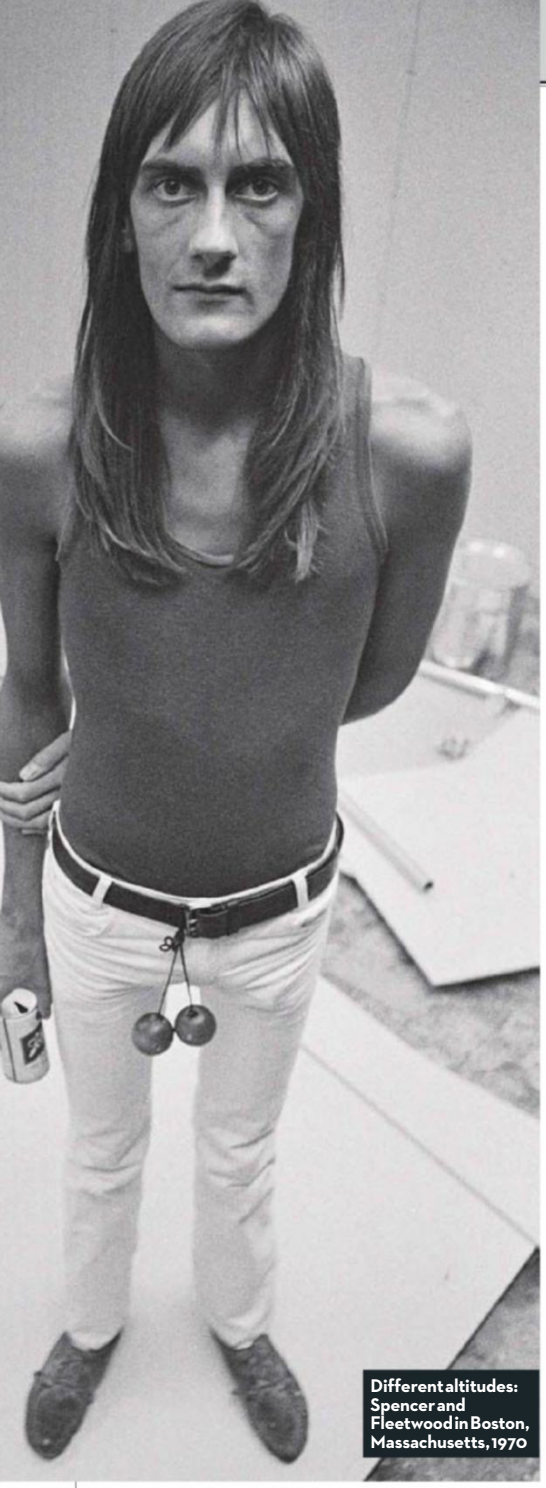
Later they went up in a 'deluxe' coach with a cocktail bar and drove around Liverpool waving to passers-by. "And we were complete and utter nobodies," laughs Mick.

Finally Mick found his way into Shotgun Express with Pete Bardens, Peter Green, Dave Ambrose of Brian Auger Trinity and Rod Stewart. But when Peter Green left to join John Mayall, Mick went back to decorating, building himself up a small but promising one-man business. He was persuaded to give that up when John Mayall asked him to join the Bluesbreakers, and it was from there that he and Peter Green left to form Fleetwood Mac.

Apart from education there are certain subjects which Mick feels most strongly about and will talk at length on. One is politics and the complete lack of direction in young people. One of his faults is letting things get bottled up inside him when he

ALMAY

Taking the Mick: Fleetwood as cover star of *Mr Wonderful*, and right, *English Rose*



Different altitudes: Spencer and Fleetwood in Boston, Massachusetts, 1970

knows he should confide in people. He's managing to rid himself of that now and says that, if you do, you are walking around without such a great weight on you and are in a position to take on others' problems instead of feeling sorry for yourself.

If he had a lot of money he would collect cars and already has three – an Alvis, an Austin 7 and a Bristol. Driving to him is an art form and he often drives the group to gigs in the Alvis. His record interests range from James Brown to The Troggs and he collects antiques and paintings by young painters to adorn his flat. He believes in God, but doesn't believe in marriage. "I believe in everything marriage stands for, except the bit of paper."

His ultimate ambition is never to be content. "I don't want to go around like a raving neurotic. I want to be happy with just a rough edge to it."

Before I left him, Mick took up again his argument against politicians and the lack of direction of youth. "There's no contact. If someone could only give the young people some fire and enthusiasm instead of the kids sitting back and saying, 'Oh man I don't care.' That's it, that's the whole point I am trying to make.

"I wish I could wake up one morning and be a fantastic politician."

THE FIRST THING to understand about Fleetwood Mac is that humour plays an important and integral part in the group. It is their humour, so zealously guarded and difficult for the outsider to comprehend, and their ability to laugh at each other, that prevents any one of them becoming flash or pretentious through success.

Jeremy Spencer, the impish, tousle-haired star of the lead guitar, provides the foundations upon which the group's humour is built, which may seem strange to the outsider judging by his outward shyness and reticence to talk about himself. But Jeremy is a bit of an oddball of a character, even in a sphere of life noted for its unpredictable and eccentric personalities.

He sings the blues but at home, away from the group, much of his listening is provided by Fabian, Buddy Holly and Tommy Roe. He plays in a group that used to be renowned for its free use of four-letter words onstage, but is a believer in God and his favourite reading is a pocket-size New Testament he takes on tour with him.

He admits to being an introvert, which you can believe, but says there is a bit of the exhibitionist in him, too, which is hard to believe. Yet if you've ever seen his incredibly funny and accurate impersonations onstage you might agree.

"I WISH I COULD WAKE UP ONE MORNING AND BE A FANTASTIC POLITICIAN"
MICK FLEETWOOD

I went to see Jeremy at his home in Paddington, a one-roomed bedsitter in a large, crumbling house. I never believed all those stories about pop stars living in palatial penthouses, but Jerry's place would shatter any illusions. If you can gain insight into a person's character by the surroundings he lives in, then Jerry's mind is eminently disorganised, a fact I gather that is quite near to the truth.

Yet in this room where chaos prevails and where you might expect to find a poor young couple eking out an existence on a miserable income, the dominating factor is the thousand pounds' worth of recording equipment that takes pride of place.

Jerry's wife, Fiona, a tiny girl with long blonde hair, and 10-month-old, Dicon ("It's a derivative of Richard") joined us later after a shopping expedition at Mothercare. Fiona is 16 and already expecting her second child. They were married last August in their home town of Lichfield, near Birmingham, just after Fiona had left school.

As Jerry seemed reluctant to talk about himself as a person, I asked Fiona for her views as Dicon climbed into the cardboard box his father had laid down as a barrier to prevent his son from reaching his recording equipment.

"He likes to keep himself to himself," she offered. Is he funny at home? She shot a despairing glance at Jerry who laughed and answered for her: "You see it's funny when you take it too far, when it gets out of hand." If Jerry is at the roots of the Fleetwood Mac humour, then Mick Fleetwood is his stooge. Totally different personalities and with their respective heights a drawback in communication, they nevertheless understand each other well.

"We are both so close together on the humour side and everything," says Jerry, "It is strange that you should pick the two of us this week."

Jerry's forte is his impersonations. He discovered the ability at school and has been making good use of it since. He recalls mimicking his headmaster's voice when his schoolmates were smoking in the toilets. "Cigs were like gold dust then," he remembers, "and they'd all file out shaking, having dropped them in the toilets."

I wouldn't have thought that made him very popular. Yes, he did suffer at school because of his height – or lack of it – but dismisses it lightly.

I had to go to the others to find out that, in fact, Jerry used to get extremely upset when he first came to London by people making remarks in the street about his hair and appearance. "I used to tell him that it was not worth it, not worth worrying about," says Mick Fleetwood.

The first pop record he can remember was Tab Hunter's "Young Love". His father a piano player, he was sent for piano lessons at 10, but quit because he wanted to play rock'n'roll. He was playing Buddy Holly, The Crickets and Tommy Roe on a Spanish guitar his father bought him and it wasn't until art college that Elmore James came into his life and brought him into the blues. "I'd heard blues before and I didn't like it. I went around a friend's house and he was playing blues and boring me to tears. Then he put on an LP of blues artists and this one track, 'The Sun Is Shining', just jumped out. Do you want to hear it?"

Jerry went out and bought *The Best Of Elmore James* and it was "never off the turntable". Then came a long time while he tried to perfect the guitarist's style. He tried using glass on the strings but failed. He tuned it like a Hawaiian guitar and used glass and failed. He used a piece of metal and then various knives but couldn't get it. Then a friend made a metal tube which he's used ever since. At the time, after art college, he was working as a junior clerk for a concrete firm, earning £6 a week out of which he paid the HP on his guitar.

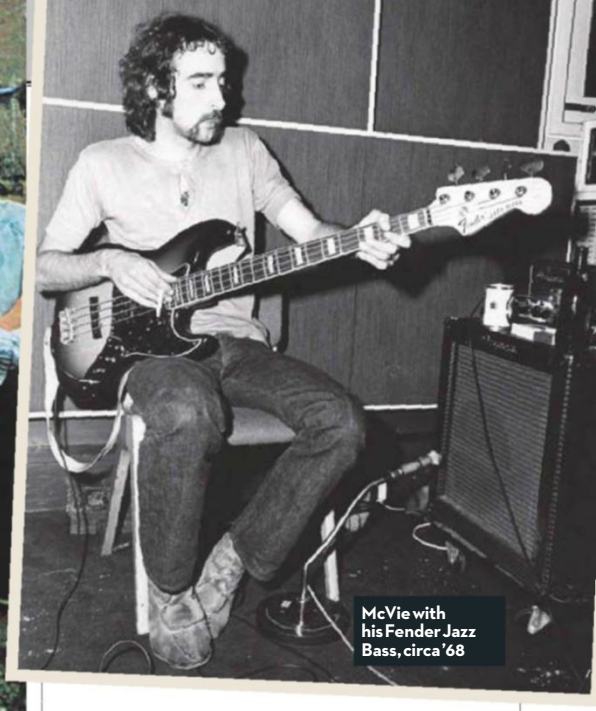
He played in a Birmingham group in the evenings and was introduced to Peter Green through an advert in the *NME* placed by Mike Vernon of Blue Horizon, who was looking for undiscovered blues talent.

Elmore James and Tommy Roe are as far at different ends of the musical scale as you can get, but Jerry is an addict of both and is overjoyed to see "Dizzy" a hit. "Will you be doing a feature on him?" he asks excitedly.

Marty Wilde, Fabian, early Cliff, Buddy Holly and to a lesser extent Elvis Presley are names among his collection of 200 old rock singles. In fact, it is one of his hobbies when Fleetwood Mac are travelling round to search through junk

CORBIS

Blues Breakers cover shot, 1966: *(l-r)* John Mayall, *Beano* fan Eric Clapton, John McVie and Hughie Flint



McVie with his Fender Jazz Bass, circa '68

shops for singles to add to his collection – many of which he got for 6d each, and he is now on the search for Fabian albums and a single called "The Shape I'm In" by Johnny Restivo.

He played me Fabian's "String-A-Long" and I asked what attracted him to sounds incredibly dated by today's standards and by Fleetwood Mac's own standards.

"Basically the music is very simple, very fresh. It's very young music, and when I used to hear these records when I was about 11 they did much more for me than records do now. You see, when you know music you get bogged up in your mind with a lot of superficial junk about chords and technicalities and then you find the enjoyment from a record is slowly vanishing. There were no pretensions about what they were doing then."

His favourite record of all time is "Sheila", which is in his collection alongside Cream and Tim Hardin and stronger items like the theme music from *Ben Hur* and *The Greatest Story Ever Told*.

The last word on Jeremy should, I think, go to Mick Fleetwood: "Our humour can be very cruel against the individual and when you've got over that you can turn around and laugh right at yourself, which is a good thing. It was Jerry who brought that about – he has done all of us a great deal of good." ***NICK LOGAN***

TAKEN FROM NME 7/6/1969

TO REACH John McVie's third-floor flatlet, you must first get clearance through the intercom in the communal hall, wait until the occupant electronically opens the inside door, then pass along a corridor to a coffin-like box which, it transpires, is the lift. John is the Fleetwood bassist with the drooping oriental moustache and the hankering for privacy, who would be in his element as a millionaire recluse.

By tradition, the bass man is the quiet man of a group. His task is to cement the group as a unit, to be the rock upon which the virtuosity is built, and in John's case this applies as much outside of group work as within. He was washing his hair in the bathroom when I arrived at the tiny, neat and dominantly white flat where the feminine touch was evident. The feminine touch – namely John's wife, Christine Perfect – made coffee while I waited.

> "JOHN MAYALL WAS MY MENTOR… VAGUELY A SORT OF FATHER FIGURE", JOHN McVIE

John's birth into music and the blues was a strange affair, and one worth relating as it provides a chapter in the history of British blues and of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers' significant part in it. A former grammar school boy with four 'O' levels, John took a job as a trainee tax officer on leaving school and it was on the first day he started work that he played his first gig as a Bluesbreaker at the White Hart, Acton. John Mayall was unknown then and this was his first band.

It was the late Cliff Barton, former bassist with Cyril Davies and a close friend of John's, who got him the job. "It was in summer '63," recalled John, rubbing his wet hair with a towel. "And it was a terrifying experience. My dad drove me there and dropped me off at the pub. I was just 16 or 17 and there were all these completely strange people who I had to get up onstage and play with. I'd had no rehearsals at all."

"No rehearsals!" echoed Christine in amazement, entering with coffees.

"None at all. John Mayall said, 'Right, play a 12-bar.' And I said, 'What's a 12-bar?'"

Laughter from Christine, who delved into the record rack and returned with the cover of the Bluesbreakers' first LP, depicting the group in suits and ties, and a short-haired John.

"We all got £1 each for those first gigs," continued John, "and John Mayall would end up with 10 bob." Later the group went out for a tenner a week and it was when the number of gigs grew to four or five a week that John quit his job in the civil service.

What attracted him to the blues? "Nothing," he replied, and then surprisingly: "It was only about a year and a half after I joined that I began to understand what I was playing, through John playing me records and telling me what to listen to. John was my mentor, my influence; vaguely a sort of father figure."

Christine, who was discovering as much as I was, had become co-interviewer by now, emitting gasps of "Oh really" at her husband's answers.

John stayed with Mayall through the lengthy period that saw some of the best current British musicians pass through and left shortly after Peter Green did, to join Fleetwood Mac.

"At that time, the Bluesbreakers were Dick Heckstall-Smith, Keef Hartley, John Colin Mercer and me. I hadn't been taking much notice of how the band was working and then suddenly the brass section seemed to be taking over. Peter had already asked me to join, but I kept turning it down because I thought I'd be better with John, and then I found out I wasn't."

Why did he join Fleetwood Mac?

"It wasn't anything about the band. When I heard them at Windsor I thought they were a bit boring, everything sounded the same. But Peter and Mick were together, I knew them and I thought I'd be happy. After a while I got into it and enjoyed it."

Born in Perivale, London, John is now 24. His father and Long John Baldry's father co-own a carpet shop in Chiswick. Music came into his life around the age of 14 when he used to play truant from school to watch a friend's band. Nowadays he says he couldn't live without music but wouldn't describe himself as a dedicated musician.

He will admit to being an introvert and he talks about himself with reluctance. So it was with mixed feelings that I greeted the arrival of Fleetwood's Mick and Danny at the flat, meeting up for the afternoon's drive to a gig. In one way their presence made John even more inhibited about himself than before. But Mick in particular, with some assistance from Christine, helped with observations that got John talking.

"He's mostly a very placid person," suggested

GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS, REXFEATURES, REX FEATURES

Mick and Christine, which prompted John into, "I'm a very sensitive person. I don't really like getting involved with people. I keep out of arguments, though if I have a drink it will come out."

On occasions John does "drink too much – but not as much as I used to. I never drink for pleasure. It was the environment when I joined Mayall that started it off, I met a lot of people who drank and it snowballed until I'd be drinking half a bottle (of spirits) a gig."

"He's a very generous person," offered Mick, "more so than anyone else in the band. The main thing about John is that he's always there. He's just very calm, the most balanced, the sanest one, possibly the worst at talking."

"I do find it difficult to talk to people," admitted John. "I'd be quite happy to stay at home forever. When you go out, you meet a lot of people you'd rather not meet."

Like Jeremy Spencer, John suffers if passers-by make abusive remarks about his appearance. The droopy moustache singles him out for attention, so why doesn't he shave it off? "That would be giving in," he smiles, "But in some ways I have been getting more conservative, particularly in my clothes."

John and Christine were married on August 3 last year at a register office in some remote part of the Midlands. They'd known each other only four months before, and John was in America for six weeks of that time. They met when Chicken Shack, Christine's former group, and the Mac were on a blues bill together at the London Savile. John proposed at the Bag O' Nails club on his return from the States. "I was so stoned I didn't know what I was doing. It seemed like a good idea at the time," he joked.

It is one of John's ambitions to buy a large house with its own grounds in the country where he could shut the door on people he didn't want to meet.

"I'd like my life to be efficient, peaceful and happy. So I suppose I want to be rich."

Don't be misled into thinking that John's self-effacing manner hides a shallow personality. There's a great deal of depth and strength behind that Fu Manchu moustache.

THEY USED TO define Danny Kirwan as the one with the choirboy face.

It was true that the shyness, the younger-than-his-age looks and the short blond hair gave an appearance that he had been snatched straight from the fifth-form cradle and plunged head first into the far from angelic world of the blues.

When Danny joined the Mac, I can remember the amusement the event caused at the *NME* and the speculation that his air of youthful innocence wouldn't survive for long on the road with his more worldly-wise colleagues. It didn't.

In the 10 months he's been with the band, Danny has let his hair find its way to more respectable blues group lengths and with the shyness fast retreating, he is looking and sounding every day less like the choirboy and more like the man of the world. It was Peter Green who, on the group's return from its last lengthy US tour, said of Danny that he had gone to America a boy and returned a man.

Certainly, being thrown into close proximity with the others, plus the fact that it was the first time he had been out of the country, played a major part in changing Danny's views and personality. At the beginning it was only to be expected that he should feel self-conscious. When he joined, it was like a fan's dreams had come true. He hadn't long had his first electric guitar, was not long out of school equipped with his six 'O' levels, his office-length hair and suit and working as a clerk for an insurance firm at Fenchurch Street. Peter Green was one of his idols.

"I was the typical Eric Clapton, Peter Green fan who loved it all," he recalls. He remembers, too, with amusement how, when he was playing with a group in the evenings, he would leave his office with his briefcase and join the bowler-hatted brigade on the commuter trains home.

> "MY DEBUT? I WAS PRETTY FRIGHTENED. FLEETWOOD MAC WERE ALREADY BIG, AND I WAS VERY SMALL"
> DANNY KIRWAN

Only Danny wouldn't be headed home, but for the Marquee. There he would take his faded jeans from his case, ruffle his hair and go on the same stage with his band where Peter Green and John Mayall would also be playing that night. His group then was The Boilerhouse, featuring Danny on lead and friends David Terry and Trevor Stevens on drums and bass. Their first gig, at the Blue Horizon club, coincided with Danny's first day as a clerk.

Playing there also that night was Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, and when Peter heard Danny play, he took an immediate interest in his career.

"He liked the band and got us some gigs at the Marquee," recalls Danny. "Then he suggested we should go professional, but the others didn't want to. The bass guitarist was going to art college. Then Peter suggested I should leave and get more musicians and go professional. I didn't want to at first, because David and Trevor were my friends, but, in the end, they all persuaded me it was the right thing to do."

Auditions, supervised by Peter and Danny, were held to pick a new group – until, after they had proved unsatisfactory, Peter suggested that he should join Fleetwood Mac.

"I was chuffed," says Danny, understating his pleasure. He had an enormous respect for the Mac leader and even now it is Peter he feels closest to in the band.

It wasn't an easy debut. "I was pretty frightened. Fleetwood Mac were already big then: they were the new underground thing. And there I was very small, very new and looking like an office man going onstage with them. They were all so well-known individually and no-one had ever seen me. Plus the fact that the group had already got two lead guitars."

The America tour was the first visit out of the country and the first long spell away from home for Danny, an only child who still lives with his parents.

"I came back more down to earth and more mindful of things," he says. "I could think a bit more straight and was more mature-minded. It also gave me a confidence in playing and we all came back from America a very tight band."

Danny's home is in Brixton, South London. Nineteen a few weeks ago, Danny has lived there all his life and has no plans to leave for a trendier home in Chelsea or Hampstead. "I like it for sentimental reasons, because I have always lived there," he explains.

Danny enjoyed his schooling in Brixton – "My friends thought I was a bit of a nutter enjoying my homework." His favourite subject was technical drawing, which he is still interested in.

It was not through lessons, but through a friend who sold him a Spanish guitar for £2 10s and taught him some chords in his last year at school, that the interest in music began. His first electric guitar, a Watkins Rapier, was bought on HP for 35 guineas when he started work. Of sentimental value, it was lost or stolen on the recent BB King tour, and he now uses a Les Paul electric.

His spare time is spent in his room at his parents' house listening to records and writing and playing with his old bass player, Trevor. Record interests are diverse. He likes The Beatles, classical guitar records, Django Rheinhardt, pre-1950 music, Mario Lanza and old swing bands like Tommy Dorsey. "Modern music is going down," he says.

His pleasures are simple, his ambitions are basic and not demanding.

"That my family will be happy and for me, just to be able to compose the songs that are going to make me happy."

Kirwan in '69: schooled by the Mac

CHRIS WALTER

TAKEN FROM NME 14/6/1969

PETER GREEN HAS a parrot called Parrot, lives in a house called Albatross and has a father who looks like Alf Garnett. He was born in the East End of London, but his blood is a potent mixture of Russian and Polish, and there is something about the jet black curls framing the ghostly white countenance that suggests haughtiness and pride and an almost

aristocratic air – of an East European blend channelled through Bethnal Green and Putney High Street.

The face itself, pale from a closeted, lonely childhood, is the fashionable ugly-beautiful brim full of enormous strength of character. It belongs to a person with a burning passion to succeed; the kind you anger or thwart at your own risk.

It was well over a year ago that I first met Peter. He came up to the *NME* for an interview and I was left with the impression of a surly, taciturn young man carrying a huge chip on his shoulder, virtually defying people to like him. But you had to – if you admired his courage and honesty. Those were the days when the group was striving for recognition, lashing their purist critics with four-letterisms from the stage and having to 'scratch' around for press coverage. For a person with as much pride as Peter, the latter was a humiliation, and the belligerence and off-handedness a form of protection.

"Albatross" changed all that. Now the roles were reversed, the press in great numbers were after Fleetwood Mac, and it was a combination of that and Peter's immersion in the attitudes of the American underground during their second American tour that changed his outlooks on life and people.

He came home prepared to look for the good sides of people instead of hitherto looking for the bad. And he came back too with an interest in Buddhism, vegetarianism and Christianity. The interest in religion threatened to engulf him, and two months back it reached its peak. "I spent a lot of time finding out about God and coming back in a big circle where I found the only thing a person could do was good, and now I am just seeking to be a good person.

"I had a strong feeling that I was walking and talking with God. I was drawing away from music into being a Christian person and it made me such a very, very happy person. But it only lasted two or three weeks. Although my faith was strong it was jarred by people who didn't want to know and I made the mistake of trying to explain it to them. But I still do believe there is a God and I believe, too, in the power of good. However, I have now come to the belief that my purpose on this earth is to create music.

"I feel that I have a gift for writing music and I am going to use that gift to the full. That means using all my spare time towards it. I'm going to stop going to clubs and seeing girls as much as I did, because that is a waste of time. People should do some good work while they are on this earth."

We were talking at Peter's home in suburban Surrey. Early in the afternoon, just after I arrived, we had driven in Peter's old red MG to visit a record shop in Putney High Street. Bypassing the pop section, Peter had headed for the classical department and after an hour or so of delving through the Handels, Bachs, Deliuses, and Tchaikovskys, we emerged with four classical LPs.

> "I FEEL I HAVE A GIFT FOR WRITING MUSIC AND I AM GOING TO USE THAT GIFT TO THE FULL"
> PETER GREEN

It was in this same Putney High Street, when Peter was in his early teens, that he would stand all day outside British Home Stores listening to records being played inside. His parents had moved to Putney when Peter, the youngest of four children, was 10. They have always been proud of their son's achievements and he fond of them.

It was he who supplied the deposit for their present house from advance writing royalties on "Albatross", and it was they who gave the house its name while Peter was away. His father is a GPO worker whose ancestors were Polish immigrants. His mother has Russian origins and as you might expect from that, Green is not the true family name. "Green-ski?" I suggested. But Peter smiled and wasn't telling.

Childhood in Bethnal Green, the heart of London's tough East End, was not a fondly remembered affair. Peter was a romantic youngster, not intellectual but always among the top three in his class. The neighbourhood was full of tough kids with whom Peter didn't want to mix and he was a lonely child, preferring to stay at home and watch TV or playing soldiers, although from an early age he remembers chasing after the girls.

At Putney he was in the top class of the grammar stream at comprehensive school, but after two terms his interest in learning nosedived – his time being spent with girls and listening to Little Richard and Bill Haley instead of doing his homework. He remembers crying because he couldn't see *Don't Knock The Rock*.

It was elder brother Len, now 33, who gave Peter his first guitar, a Spanish one, and the youngster picked up the technique with remarkable authority for his age. But he was always very shy, despite being a budding teddy boy, and later in his teens when his parents arranged a spot for him on the *Carroll Levis Discoveries* TV show Peter 'chickened' out through fear.

For as long as he could remember, he had wanted to be a professional musician, but the gulf between those that made it and were on TV seemed insurmountable. Later in his life it was to get him all "knotted up inside" that pop was such a closed shop with him continually knocking on the door. He formed groups at school with friends and carried on semi-pro when he left working, first in a butcher's shop and then as a French polisher, hating both.

His break came when Eric Clapton left John Mayall's Bluesbreakers to go to Greece. Mayall had used various deputies and Peter, who stood in for a week, was the last before Clapton returned. Once more seemingly having the door slammed on him, Peter advertised for a job and joined Peter B's Looners along with Pete Bardens, Mick Fleetwood and Dave Ambrose, now of the Trinity.

It lasted till Eric Clapton again left Mayall, this time to form Cream, and Peter was asked to join permanently. That period saw Peter at his most bitter. "I didn't like people, because I had been brought up among a load of toughs." He recalls. I had something against the world." It was a feeling that was reflected in the almost vicious way Peter played his guitar.

"It was my snappy, bad-tempered phase." He continued, "I used to get into arguments with friends. I'd always want my own way, I've always been stubborn."

His reputation enhanced by his stay with Mayall, Peter left after a year, intent on going to Chicago to work with veteran American bluesmen there. The state of British blues then angered Peter deeply, "There were a million groups making a mockery of the blues," he says, "and a million guitarists playing as fast as they could and calling it the blues. I didn't want the music messed around with. I suppose I was possessive about it."

When the Chicago trip fell through, Peter heard

Circa '69: "We want to play more in Britain"

ALAMY

Getting biblical: the Mac in 1969

about Mike Vernon starting Blue Horizon and thought it would be 'fun' to form a group for the new label. Hence Fleetwood Mac.

"At first I hated the responsibility and it was a case of when I would crack up." He recalls, "Mick and I used to drive the van in those days and it was a case of all these new groups scratching around for interviews."

Peter's feelings have always been detectable through his music. *Mr Wonderful* was full of songs of chagrin, hurt and bitterness. The new LP, like "Albatross" and "Man Of The World", will be full of awareness and beauty and peace. His enthusiasm is one of the vital factors in Peter's make-up and, just as he threw himself into establishing Fleetwood Mac, there are now no half measures about his current probing into his own mind and his interest in classical music, which he feels will bring a heavy influence to bear on his future writing. At one time it was Peter's ambition to play the Marquee. Then it was to have a No 1 hit. Now it is to conduct a well-known orchestra, playing his own classical music before an audience. To him it is now just a dream, but the urge is there. He says, "It would be nice to leave lots of music behind when I die."

TAKEN FROM MM 25/10/1969

OVER THE PAST few months personal appearances by the Fleetwood Mac have been limited, but now the band are eager to get back on the road again in Britain.

"At the moment everything is building up to the American tour," Fleetwood guitarist and singer Peter Green told me on the phone from Belfast last week.

The group were in Ireland for a two-day concert stint, which included an amazing concert in Dublin's National Stadium where the Mac were mobbed as they left the stage after a highly successful sell-out show.

"Scandinavian tours are always good, but we want to play a lot more in Britain," continued Peter. "The whole band feel right now that they'd like to go on the road and we probably will do when we come back from America. We want to do an English tour, which is what we should be doing right now."

With single hit "Oh Well" moving up in the chart and latest album *Then Play On* in the LP chart, I asked Peter if there was any kind of pressure on the group to make more appearances on the British scene.

"No, there's no pressure," replied Peter, "I don't feel any pressure to stay in Britain."

So Fleetwood fans will have to wait until the group return from America for the group's next series of dates in British venues. "English audiences are good, they really let themselves go. I think this is because the English audiences know us now. In Ireland, too, they let themselves go. The audience in Dublin seemed a bit young, but they weren't too noisy while we were playing, they listened to us. I think the band could have been better musically, but the audience obviously thought it was good and, as long as they were satisfied, that's the main thing."

A satisfied audience also means satisfied record buyers and this is reflected in the good sales of the Mac's recordings. These have reflected the increasing musical diversity of the band, although Peter maintains that *Then Play On* is a very bluesy album. "It's more bluesy than some of our other albums. Nearly every track has something to do with the blues in it."

Peter is also reluctant to agree to any labelling of what the Mac play. "You can't label anything. We play anything we like and that covers a pretty wide range. We do rock'n'roll and blues, and ballad-type things, anything we fancy. But 'Albatross' is 'Albatross'. As far as we are concerned, it's been done, we won't develop it any further. There is only one 'Albatross'."

As well as the group things, individual members of Fleetwood Mac are making solo albums. Slide-guitarist and pianist Jeremy Spencer has completed his album and guitarist Danny Kirwan is also working on one.

"Jeremy has done his," Peter told me. "He produced it himself. Mick and John are on it and Danny plays guitar and does some vocal backing. Apart from one banjo track, which I've got to put on, I'm the only one that isn't on it, in fact."

Was Peter contemplating a solo album? "I did at one time, but I haven't got anything that is very good yet for an album. And I wouldn't record it unless I had all good numbers for it." And he added, "But the next LP is a Fleetwood Mac LP, very much a group album, everyone is on it 100 per cent."

As far as singles go, there are no specific plans for any follow-up to "Oh Well", said Peter. "We plan it to be one thing and change it the next day so I can't really say. We'll wait and see what comes out of the recording sessions.

"But one thing I'd like it to be is something different and also as unique as possible. I think all our hit singles have been unique, 'Albatross', 'Man Of The World', and 'Oh Well'. There's nothing more of a drag than having a follow-up that sounds exactly the same sort of thing as the previous one."

GEORGE WILKES/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

TAKEN FROM NME 28/2/1970

"YOU DON'T THINK it's too expensive do you?" asked Peter Green earnestly as he reversed his £700 white Jaguar out of a car park in Richmond park. "If you look around, most of the other cars here... that one and even that one... would cost more than £700, and Mick and John's cost a lot more than that."

Looking every day more like a character out of the massive bound Bible that sits on a shelf in the middle of his extensive stereo collection, the heavily hairy Mac leader is home after the group's three-month stretch in America, wanting to give his money away. Not all of it, but all that he feels is in excess of his share. His passing obsession with the price of his car – he would have liked an AC Cobra but that would have cost at least twice as much – comes from attitudes that have grown to fruition during his spell in the States.

Peter wants to help – financially – the starving and those that fail to get a good education and opportunities, and had been explaining earlier: "My parents and I have got our house. I've got my car, which isn't really expensive and I'm happy with that. I've also got my stereo and most of the records I want. All in all, it's a very good helping, if you look at it in terms of each person's share, so I am satisfied with what I've got. And there are so many people who haven't got anything at all, I feel the least I can do is give away my excess."

"Not that I have millions and millions, but there are going to be some big chunks coming in compared to what the average man earns. I haven't had any of my songwriting money yet and there's all that to give. Then there's my share of the advance from Reprise Records, £18,000. That's money to give. I've had these ideas for a long time; now I'm going to act on them. There must be no starvation. Just because somebody is born on the other side of the world that is no reason why they should be starving for it.

"I am not going into poverty with them, although I did think of doing that. It would perhaps have made me feel better. This way, the more money I earn, the more I can give away. Doing that is easy. Maybe one day I will put myself to work, as well, but at the moment I think that by going round and playing to, and meeting, people, I can do much in that way.

"What other people do with their money is none of my business, but I know what it is like to earn £5 a week and have a good laugh and to earn £500. I can be just as happy... like when I was a butcher earning a fiver a week. I do feel guilty about squandering money on myself, but I am now going to be careful. I have felt that a lot... even when I eat sometimes. The very least I can do is give away that money I don't need, and anyone who thinks money is going to make them happy is so wrong.

"I would love to go yachting. I love cars. I would like to buy an AC Cobra but the thing is, that before I do that, I would like to know that everyone is getting their bowlful of rice every day."

> "THE VERY LEAST I CAN DO IS GIVE AWAY THE MONEY THAT I DON'T NEED"
> PETER GREEN

Peter also hopes to do charity shows with the group – "That would be better because then I won't have to touch the money," – and the first is a Fleetwood Mac performance at the London Lyceum on April 12 in aid of Jewish old people. There will of course be sceptics who question the reasons behind his benevolence, but they get a typical Green retort: "It's my business what I do. Anyone who's sceptical can go and get fucked!"

We'd driven out from Peter's New Malden home with Jane, the group's fan club secretary, and were sitting next to the window in some terribly, terribly English tea rooms watching the squirrels hop around the park. It was a far cry from the Holiday Inn, turnpike, airport and hamburger trail that had been the group's lot for the past three months

"What's John Lennon been doing while we've been away?" asked Peter and, after he'd been regaled with up-to-date Lennonisms, professed a deep admiration for the Beatle's work for peace.

"I really enjoyed the tour," he said later, "Our American agent who books lots of British bands like Jethro Tull, Ten Years After etc, said that in terms of a group leaping upwards in status it was one of the most successful he'd been associated with. We felt we'd made an important foothold. Of course, there were lots of ups and downs and times when we got under each other's feet, but the feeling on the plane coming home was so good that if we'd been asked to turn around and go back I think we all would."

Like most of our group visitors, he finds the American situation depressing, but sees the good side even in areas like the Deep South if there is at least one 'nice' person to meet.

"In some places it is just a talkative taxi driver, like the fellow in Maryland who knew England. But we did make a lot of new friends there."

Was there anything in rumours of Danny Kirwan planning to leave the group? "I would say no, but obviously you'd have to ask Danny that because I've walked offstage before thinking I've had enough. And obviously there are going to be times like that with all groups on tour. I'd say that, like the last time we came back from America, the band is closer than it has ever been and Danny and I are now working and playing together, which we haven't done before."

Peter went on to disclose that Danny and he are planning an album together based round their two lead guitars and that he is to record a solo album for release at Christmas. "One of the songs on it I wrote in Chicago when it was snowing... it's a sort of poem set to music... and I'd like it to be heard in that sort of atmosphere."

The group has also brought back tapes of three shows they did at the Boston Tea Party and these will be edited for a live album "when we get the time. We've got about 209 new numbers as well and we should really be recording now. But we've got so much touring to do."

Contrary to reports, "The Green Manalishi" has not been chosen as their next single. It is, says Peter, just one from a batch of tracks they'll record and then pick from.

WE GOT BACK onto our earlier subject and through that onto the need for opportunity, Peter's peace of mind and skinheads. "I come from that kind of background (Bethnal Green) and I know the skinhead feeling of trying to prove yourself 'cos you have nothing else. You just want to be someone. Now I feel myself to be more or less someone, I can look at it from both sides.

"I had the feelings I have now when I was a kid in the East End, but I couldn't walk up to people there and be friendly because they would beat your brains out. I think of life as a long pipe you're looking into. When you're born, the pipe is open and the inside smooth. Things like a bad family foundation, poverty and lack of opportunity start to corrode the inside until it begins to close up.

"I came from a working-class home, a good family background, but things around me started to rust the pipe up. That's what happens for lots of people. For me it has now opened up to like it was when I was a little kid. I feel a great brotherliness towards people and I'm not ashamed to feel it."

Fried piper: Green in 1970

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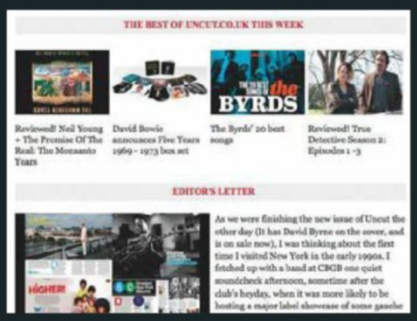

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THEN PLAY ON

Inspired by acid rock and folk, Peter Green unveils an enhanced exploratory vision for the band. What could possibly go wrong?

BY ROB HUGHES

THE YEAR OF 1969 was a watershed for Fleetwood Mac. The release of *Mr Wonderful*, the previous August, had coincided with Peter Green's recruitment of an extra guitarist, 18-year-old hotshot Danny Kirwan, from South London trio Boilerhouse. This was partly due to Jeremy Spencer's reluctance to chip in on Green's songs. Primarily though, it was an indication of Green's desire to broaden the blues into something more exploratory.

The band had been inching in a new direction since the summer of '68, when their first West Coast tour of the US had exposed them to the open-ended acid rock of The Grateful Dead and Pacific Gas And Electric. Green began charging his new compositions with the same free-spirited sense of discovery, to the point where a curious thing happened: Fleetwood Mac started having hits.

"Albatross", a deft, echoey instrumental that moved along at a meditatively languid pace, topped the British charts in February 1969. "Man Of The World", another softly descriptive not-quite blues, followed in April. This time it stopped just shy of the No 1 spot.

The combination of Green's improvised guitar lines and Kirwan's innate gift for melody formed the core structure of *Then Play On*, the record that Fleetwood Mac began work on that spring. The unwavering allegiance to blues purism, so evident on Spencer's contributions to the first two albums, was absent. As, indeed, was Spencer himself, who (so the story goes) refused to compromise his Elmore James fixation for Green's new design.

> INFINITELY MORE DARING AND EXPERIMENTAL THAN ANYTHING THEY'D YET ATTEMPTED

Not that Spencer's truancy was critical. Again borrowing from the looser approach of their US peers, the Mac used their studio time to jam freely. The result was an album that was infinitely more daring and experimental than anything they'd yet attempted. If Green's abiding dictum was that blues guitar should be a natural extension of the way a musician was feeling, then these songs represented an intensely personal vision.

The Mac's gentler, more autumnal appropriation of the blues was something of an anomaly compared to most of Green's British contemporaries. Whereas Led Zeppelin, Ten Years After and Free all tended to amplify the constituent parts of American blues, Fleetwood Mac spent at least half of their time surveying its softer details.

Kirwan's songs, in fact, were often closer to folk than blues. "When You Say" and "Although The Sun Is Shining" both sound like the kind of things that might've wafted out from a Soho folk cellar at any point from the mid '60s upwards. Green's "Under Way", meanwhile, is a nimble instrumental whose tonal guitar impressions and fluid drumming (Mick Fleetwood in inspired form) align themselves to jazz rather than straight-up blues.

The song finds a companion in another instrumental jam, John McVie's "Searching For Madge", which sees the whole band in full flight, roaring onwards for a full seven minutes.

Perhaps Kirwan's standout contribution is "Coming Your Way", a highly rhythmic triumph of blues guitar lashed to a tribal groove. The same sense of unbound bliss permeates Green's "Rattlesnake Shake", and probably for good reason. The song is a boogified ode to wanking, even offering a

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The group are well into experiment without pretension, and heavy rock with a soul of its own. Melody is also an important weapon in their approach."

MELODY MAKER, OCTOBER 25, 1969

roguish name-check to Fleetwood in its lyric. *"His name is Mick/Now, he don't care when he ain't got no chick,"* sings Green. *"He do the shake/The rattlesnake shake."*

Despite such frivolity, Fleetwood Mac's leader was finding it tougher to banish his own blues. The sadness that had marked "Man Of The World" – *"There's no-one I'd rather be/But I just wish that I'd never been born"* – now bled into the sentiments of *Then Play On*. Certainly, the lyrics of "Before The Beginning" suggested the work of a man for whom fame is anything but bouquets and biscuits: *"Can't sleep, but no good to count sheep/I'll just count the worries that I've got plenty of... You talk about a life, been searching for the key/But can't find an answer to comfort me."*

Green seemed both conflicted and confused. On one hand, he was a virtuoso with a vision for the blues that was rapidly outgrowing the confines of a band format. Yet, at the same time, he wanted to be treated as a team player rather than superstar guitarist. The encroachment of fame and material wealth, in fact, was troubling him greatly.

This was partly evident in his *NME* interview with Nick Logan earlier that year, where he talked of his deepening interest in Buddhism and Christianity. He'd started giving his money away to various charities and had told *Melody Maker* that all he wanted was to grow vegetables on a farm with an open-door policy to strangers.

Green's predicament was laid bare on "Show-Biz Blues", a rattling electric beauty that tipped the nod to Bukka White. The song intimated that Green's time in Fleetwood Mac might soon be up: *"I said you're sitting there so green/Believe me man I'm just the same as you/You want me to make a last cry, I'll be satisfied/And that's exactly what I mean to do."*

To hell with the purists. Green saw the blues as a mutable entity whose true purpose lay not in faithfulness to tradition, but in the malleable way it lent itself to personal experience. In those terms, a white Jewish kid from the East End had just as much right to it as a black sharecropper from the Delta.

Issued on their new home at Reprise, *Then Play On* was Fleetwood Mac's biggest hit thus far, making the Top 6 in the UK and selling over 100,000 copies in the United States. But it also signalled the changing of the guard. As prophesised in "Show-Biz Blues", Green quit the band eight months later, in May 1970. Still only 23, success appeared to provoke an inverse reaction in his psyche.

His bandmates may have been ecstatic at their rising popularity, but Green – as Mick Fleetwood put it in his recent memoir *Play On: Now, Then And Fleetwood Mac* – entered "a dark, depressed cocoon of his own making". It was to be the start of a long struggle with schizophrenia.

Then Play On stands as the best, and last, of Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac.

TRACKMARKS THEN PLAY ON

1. Coming Your Way ★★★★
2. Closing My Eyes ★★★★
3. Fighting For Madge ★★★★
4. When You Say ★★★
5. Show-Biz Blues ★★★★
6. Under Way ★★★★
7. One Sunny Day ★★★
8. Although The Sun Is Shining ★★★
9. Rattlesnake Shake ★★★★
10. Without You ★★★★
11. Searching For Madge ★★★★
12. My Dream ★★★
13. Like Crying ★★★★
14. Before The Beginning ★★★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Fleetwood Mac
Recorded: De Lane Lea Studios, London
Personnel: Peter Green (vocals, guitar, harmonica, six-string bass, percussion), Danny Kirwan (vocals, guitar), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion)
Highest chart position: UK 6; US 109

Peter Green in 1970: "I don't want to be part of the conditioned world"

"I want to change my whole life."

Great upheaval is afoot, not for the last time in Fleetwood Mac. At the height of the chaos, Peter Green leaves his own band, "not happy with the way my life is being run." Undaunted, his former colleagues retreat to a communal Kiln House in Hampshire, and find the perfect replacement incredibly close to home — step forward Mrs Christine McVie. "Now," she says, "I am a part of people who are my friends."

TAKEN FROM NME 11/4/1970

PETER GREEN HAD just got up; coming down to meet me in the music room of his Surrey home, stretching, smiling abundantly and singing the "sympathy and understanding" verse from "Aquarius" before sitting down amongst the mounting bric-a-brac, records, letters, books, amplifiers and bird cages to tell me why he is leaving Fleetwood Mac.

"There are many reasons; the main thing being that I feel it is time for a change. I want to change my whole life, really, because I don't want to be at all a part of the conditioned world and as much as possible I am getting out of it. I am always concerned with what is right with God and what God would have me do... that is the most important thing to me... that dominates every thought in my head. I don't feel I want to be a part of Fleetwood Mac anymore... no longer frustrated, free to do what I like."

His mother brought tea and Peter continued, "As you know, there is a whole big movement going on like a revolution. I want to be a part of that, so that whatever I do – whether I form another group or not – I need to be with people who feel exactly the same as I do: that is, they don't worry about security in terms of money. We will be doing a lot of free concerts as long as they are not being promoted for private gain.

"I want to get 100 per cent into music. I want to do lots of jamming with different groups and musicians. I want to do all I can to bring people to God and peace... full-time, not just now and again. I want to be completely free to do what I like."

> "I WAS CUT DOWN BY BEING A THIRD OF THE GROUP'S FRONT LINE"
> PETER GREEN

He had, he said, been thinking of leaving for some time and had broken the news to the rest of the band in Munich a few weeks ago.

"I was cut down," he went on, "by being a third of the group's front line. That was quite fun when it started but after a while I felt I couldn't get into anything because after a couple of numbers I would have to step back to let the others have their chance. They were disturbed when I told them and shook up a bit.

"The thing about Fleetwood Mac was that people may think I was the main person in the group because the

BARRY PLUMMBER

singles were my songs, but onstage all of us have always been only parts of the group. In Germany, for instance, Jeremy has always been the one they've centred on."

The rest of the band will definitely carry on as Fleetwood Mac, put in manager Clifford Davis, who had joined us, although it hadn't been decided whether to take on a replacement. They would take a rest after Peter's last date with them on May 25 to decide which way to go and he thought it likely there would be a new guitarist.

I asked Peter why he can't do what he wants within the framework of Fleetwood Mac.

"I could try, but I know it wouldn't work out... I want to do my own things and do them at length. I want to do them with people who think like me, who want to be into it full-time. I know they would be willing to play them, but the kind of music I want demands that it is a personal thing felt within everyone's heart and not just a piece of music to be played. It has to be 100 per cent.

"You see I am not happy with the way my life is being run. There is no rest. No time to do anything, to develop my character. It is like I am a nine-to-five worker, but it's worse because at least they get evenings off. Always pounding away onstage, I don't have any time to be me. It's not enough just to be successful... It has become a business and I don't want to be a part of a business. I never did a deliberate hit record... I can say that... I never got into it to that extent.

"I want out of the cut and dried business angle... the feeling that it's good if we and the promoter make a good screw and go down well at the same time... I don't want to be a part of that. I want it to be a good free thing for people... just to play music and give it to people.

"In other words I am a religious nutcase," he laughed.

I put it back to him that although he might be laughing, isn't that what a great many people would think... that he is a crank?

"It will be funny if they do," he replied. "But only the business people will, because they think anyone who doesn't want to be rich is a nutcase. I am no more religious than the average Christian."

Apart from jamming and playing, Peter's plans include firstly recording a solo album that's likely to end up a double set. He thinks it would be nice if the record company agree for him to waive his royalties so it can be sold as cheaply as possible.

"I don't want any money," he says, echoing his feelings from the last interview we did when he announced his intention of giving his excess earnings to charities. "Just enough to buy tapes, equipment, keep the house and have food to eat."

He says he wants to make his music for the "peaceful young"... "those for whom listening to music is like a religion... but to others as well who want to listen."

He feels his leaving will bring more out of Jeremy and says: "I have become the speaker for the band but Jerry used to do that. As I found my feet and confidence Jerry has sunk back. In my opinion he is a genius but because there are three of us at the front he cannot get fully into it. He is the funniest person I have ever met – he's incredible – and he also has so much to offer musically."

And finally: "You see it's been a great thing for me to be brought up in the East End with all the violence there and to manage to live through that kind of upbringing and find God and people who think the same way. I want to give that feeling to as many people as I can..."

IT IS A source of regret when any group still with potential to release finds itself splitting from within; even more regretful when for most of its life-span that group has been as close in intellect and spirit as was Fleetwood Mac. Just what happened to prise apart such a solidly bonded union, leaving Peter Green growing apart from the band he founded, can't be put down to any specific cause. But there must be some causes and some stand up more than others.

"I think if we could have done a month ago what we are doing now, Peter might never have left. I really do," maintains Mick Fleetwood from the garden of the communal home the group has rented in Hampshire.

What Mick refers to is the relaxation Fleetwood Mac is attempting to achieve in what is a two-month break from the road. And the springs they are trying to unwind are, they believe, the same springs that took their erstwhile leader off on a course of his own.

That assertion has to be looked at in the light of what Fleetwood Mac had been through in the three months before Peter broke the news to them in Munich that he was going. The group had gone almost straight off on that month-long tour of Europe after three arduous months trekking across America and, if the split hadn't come then, they would now be on the road here for a British tour.

"If we could have come down here and had this rest a month ago, I think Peter wouldn't have felt the need to go," Mick reasserts. "But three months in America, a month on the Continent... living in hotels out of suitcases... it is too much. It was affecting all of us but Peter was just the first to snap."

Not the kind of people to indulge in recriminations, they can see Peter's side. "A creative person like him needs time to create," concedes Jeremy Spencer, "and he didn't have it. I can see that."

Whatever the cause, it has happened and, while Peter Green works on his solo album in London, Fleetwood Mac aim now to find as much rest as possible when just around the next bush lurk the demands of an all-important album and the pressures of keeping the group's fortunes going.

If atmosphere is of any import, then their home in Hampshire, miles from the nearest village and at the end of a dirt track, gives them a good start. A converted oast house owned by a friend of Mick Fleetwood, it's an incredible Aladdin's Cave of a place, haphazardly furnished with the group's possessions and equipment.

The central core of this very old building, interior walls and crumbling white stone, is kitted out as a makeshift recording studio and, as an example of the bizarreness of the place, the equipment is flanked on one side by a massive antique bedroom suite and on the other side by a brass bed. It's an amazing place to visit – maybe 'browse through' would be a better term – but probably not one you'd like to live in.

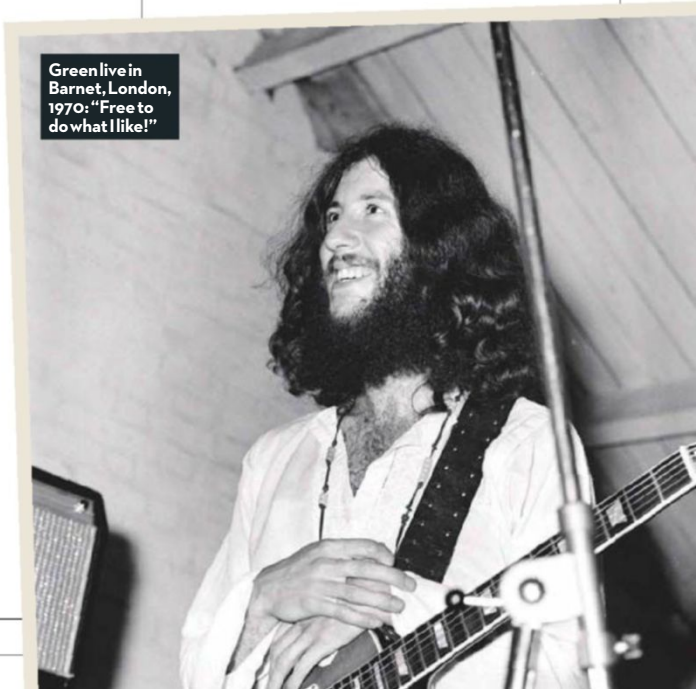
For domestic reasons, the band had wanted out of their flats in London and although the oast house is only a temporary home for the two months – until they go to America – they are after a permanent communal home in this part of the country where members, wives and children can live and work together.

You know instinctively that they are the kind of people who could make that idea work. Mick and Jeremy, however, laugh to themselves at the thought that they've "gone to the country to get it all together", and do an amusing parody of that kind of mentality which goes something like... Mick: "Oh, of course we realise we have a strong enough name to get the really big money for another couple of years yet," and so forth.

Their manager Clifford Davis drove me out there on one of last week's hottest days and we arrived to find the Fleetwood girls... Christine Perfect, Fiona Spencer and Jenny Boyd... out in the sun with Jeremy's two young children and John's father. Mick was on the phone, making arrangements for his wedding to Jenny, and looking impressively tanned against Jeremy's whiteness.

"We are just so lucky to have found this place... it is so perfect," said Mick, when we sat in the garden to talk. "Obviously it was possible for the band to go on working when Peter left, but we would just have been doing the same numbers and we needed a break."

They also need to produce a new album – "very, very important" to them – and the responsibility


Green live in Barnet, London, 1970: "Free to do what I like!"

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

And then there were four: The Mac minus Green, 1970

here falls heavily on Jeremy and Danny as the songwriters. Both are taking it well.

They had hoped to actually record at the house, not only because of its proximity but the special atmosphere they could have got on record, though costs of hiring and buying equipment in the short time they have seem to have ruled that out and daily treks into town look to be on.

Had they thought of breaking up when Peter quit? "Lots of things flashed through our minds," answered Mick. "As far as I was concerned, I had always been very happy with the people and the band and the best possible thing for me was to stay. If someone leaves it is a pity, but there it is...

"Breaking up isn't in the wind now, whether there is an up or a down as far as success with records. We are keeping going with the band as it is. Of course that crosses your mind. Like any upset not planned for you feels a bit strange. Especially through the fact that we were a complete band in every sense and now here we are..." he shrugged. "I don't think Peter should have done it."

"But obviously," broke in Jeremy, "he has done what he feels best."

Mick: "Right... and when you know that, you want to help him as a person. Well, not help, but take an interest in seeing that he is all right, hoping that he is doing the same for you."

Danny arrived from town tired and went off to sleep. John, who goes through vehicles like the proverbial hot dinners, returned from selling his car in the village and immediately set off to buy a motorbike he'd seen. Clifford Davis went with him.

Apprehensions are obviously there as regards their future, but Jeremy comments: "As far as a drop in popularity or status is concerned, it depends what you mean by status. If it means hit records, I don't think any of us are really worried. We've never worried that much about that side."

Reactions from foreign bookers offered to the four-piece Fleetwood have so far been highly encouraging – only one or two refusals from America, with Peter's leaving having no effect whatsoever on the Continent. The band bases its belief in its ability to hold followers in the fact that they were widely regarded as a group with three equal frontmen and, to people who know that, the loss of one isn't going to make so much difference.

> "IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE DESTROYED BY PEOPLE SHOUTING OUT, YOU MAY AS WELL GIVE UP"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

Says Mick: "In that respect we are quite fortunate, really, because to some bands something like this could be disastrous."

If there are shouts for Peter Green, it won't worry Mick, who is quite definite in saying: "These are things you always get. John Mayall has had it all along. If you are going to get upset and be destroyed by people shouting out then you might as well give up."

John had arrived back on his motorbike, an aggressive looking ex-scrambler he'd bought for £45, and came up the drive in best '*Easy Rider*' style, hair swept back by the wind. Danny has woken up and before we left Clifford talked business with the band, making arrangements for recording and the American tour.

Rather than lose their bond, Fleetwood Mac seem to have risen to the threat to their resolve and togetherness and – aided by their new communal existence – may well emerge from it all closer than ever.

TAKEN FROM NME 22/8/1970

WITH THE PARTIES concerned not around to explain otherwise, the most logical assumption to be drawn from the news that Christine McVie – she wants to drop the Perfect – had joined Fleetwood Mac was that the band as a four-piece had not lived up to expectations. After all, when Peter Green left, it had seemed so obvious to replace him with Christine, who had made no secret of her growing unhappiness as a soloist, yet the group gave the impression that not only was such a move out of the question, it was unnecessary anyway. Having three lead guitarist/singer/writers had been a restriction, it was pointed out, and they didn't need anyone else.

What exactly had changed their minds I found out from Fleetwood Mac drummer Mick Fleetwood in a transatlantic call to the group's Los Angeles hotel last week.

"We needed Christine to fill the sound out," revealed Mick, who had been not long out of bed. "To make it more relaxing for everyone, particularly Jeremy and Danny. With just the four of us there was no time for either of them to relax or lessen their contribution because the bottom, the substance, would fall out of the overall sound."

HARRY GOODWIN

Christine McVie joins the band... "We needed her to fill the sound out"

Christine, living with her husband John at the group's communal country home, had started sitting in on sessions with them there, said Mick, and that was what brought home to them the need for more back-up support.

"The difference between playing as a five-piece with Christine and then rehearsing with just the four of us became really noticeable," continued Mick. "It just sort of crept up on us, what should happen. It was thought of vaguely for some time and then about a week before we left for the States we decided to bring her in. It's worked out fine on the road. It's all more relaxing and now it seems a very obvious choice to have Christine as a member."

The band was into its fourth week in America when we spoke and had arrived the day before in Los Angeles for a five-day stint at the Whisky A Go Go. I was lucky to have caught them, said Mick, because they'd been booked into a new Holiday Inn hotel – grotesque at the best of times but this one smelling of paint – and were planning to get out somewhere else at the earliest opportunity.

"EVERYONE THOUGHT IT A GOOD IDEA THAT I JOIN, BUT NOBODY HAD GOT ROUND TO SAYING IT"
CHRISTINE McVIE

The tour is the first work the group has done since Peter Green left and Mick reports no adverse reactions so far to either their former leader's absence or the new lineup. "There have been shouts out for old numbers, some of them Peter's," said Mick, "But then our new album isn't out here yet. Also we are playing in a lot of places we haven't been to before, as is usually the pattern, and in others I think some people may not even realise that Peter has gone."

THE INCOMING MRS McVie has returned the band to having three 'front stars' and in that respect she is directly filling Green's place. As Mick Fleetwood explains, her piano-playing and singing help to fill out the sound, but she also has her own featured spots in a set, just as guitarists Danny Kirwan and Jeremy Spencer do.

Having dropped all of Peter Green's numbers, as well as Kirwan's old material, their repertoire now consists of tracks from the soon-to-be-released *Kiln House* album along with Christine's numbers and the old Spencer evergreens that Fleetwood Mac wouldn't be the same without.

"To start with, it was strange being back on the road," announced Mick. "As you know, we haven't worked for a long, long time, but for me personally, and I think Danny and John, too, it was just as if we were carrying on from the last tour without a break... as if those five months in between had all been lost."

Having played only a limited number of gigs so far, the band isn't yet sufficiently immersed in the American music scene, but has noticed certain changes since their last visit and has some first-hand evidence of the reported unease in the country. Wisely taking a two-day break to rest and rehearse after they arrived, their first gig was due to be an open-air festival near Boston. Also on the bill were Sly And The Family Stone who, two days earlier, had been, it is claimed, the cause of a Chicago festival turning into a riot. In the current tense atmosphere, the Boston authorities got cold feet and called the festival off... but not after 40,000 kids had already arrived.

Next on the date sheet, the band weren't too happy to learn, was a show in the heart of Redneck and *Easy Rider* country, New Orleans. The 'sweaty palms' and apprehension turned out to be unwarranted in this case, reported Mick, because it transpired to be a nice gig.

San Francisco, normally a happy hunting ground for Fleetwood Mac, didn't live up to expectations either. "We met Procol Harum and Blodwyn Pig who had been out there before us," said Mick, "and they told us it had changed. San Francisco has always been very good for us in the past but we found that the audiences had had so much of everything and that there were a lot of young kids messed up on drugs.

"By the end of an evening a lot of them would be drowsy and falling asleep. If no-one else had noticed I might have thought it was just us, but the other groups said the same."

The band doesn't return to Britain until October 11 and apart from *Kiln House* – recorded before they left and due out soon – there aren't likely to be any more records from them until then. Clifford Davis, their manager, said last week he would like to issue as a single a track from the album called "Jewel Eyed Julie" – written by Kirwan-McVie-Fleetwood and the first time the bassist and drummer have had a shot at writing – but would need the group's confirmation first.

I mentioned it to Mick and he said that they were "pretty sure" they wouldn't release any album tracks as singles. "We haven't really thought much about a single. We might do one when we get back. We'll have a lot of new material obviously and we'll be more together by then."

CHRIS WALTER/PHOTOFEATURES.COM

TAKEN FROM
NME 31/10/1970

RATHER LIKE A politician going back to woo his grassroots support, Fleetwood Mac is currently presenting its new face for public approval. Not that the Mac have ever failed to keep faith with the audiences that originally made their name, but the current British gigs are their first since July and their first chance to assess the effects of Peter Green's departure and to make good any weakening to what was hitherto a most solid and enviable reputation. What they are virtually asking for, and what they are apparently going to get if the first few gigs are any guide, is a public vote of confidence second time around.

As far as confidence in themselves goes, there is enough of that around the group at the moment as, having come through the 'confused times' that followed the Green upheaval they have acquired not only the very talented Christine McVie as a replacement, but have found a new aura of determination and purpose, too.

When I met the band over lunch in an Italian restaurant recently they had been urgently getting together new material and counting off the days to the first gigs, recognising the need to get back to where they once belonged with John McVie's words, "We have to get the group back into contact with the audiences."

Being not long back from a two-month American tour – Christine joined five days before they left – the band is much more together than it was in the directionless interim that followed Green's leaving and their aim now is to present a much more integrated face to the public. That the days of the three clearly defined singers/writers/guitarists are being left behind is already evident onstage in the way that all five members now play on each other's numbers. Jeremy Spencer, for example, is no longer lurking in the wings for his featured spots then slinking off again.

And, apart from the fact that they've since swollen to five strong, their current *Kiln House* LP, in that respect, is not really representative of where the Mac are today, but is more in John McVie's words, a "product of those confused times". Indicating as examples, "Station Man" and "Tell Me All The Things You Do" from *Kiln House*, the album's best tracks, Christine and John point out that in future all five will attempt to write material together and reach a unified style instead of, as in the past, just three of them coming up with individual pieces.

Over lunch, I asked Christine her reasons for joining the band.

"When I broke up my own group," she replied, "I didn't particularly want to stop playing. Having a band was just a position and a responsibility I had never been in before. With Chicken Shack I used to do two, three numbers a night, but Stan Webb was the main attraction. My own band was just a massive weight. When I got that band together, I had just a fortnight to get to know them, to get them to know each other and get numbers together.

"It was all strange to me, so that the first gigs were diabolical and promoters were naturally disappointed because I was being paid a lot of money. Then, as we started getting better with time, the money was going down and I ended up losing a lot of money. I was just feeling disillusioned and thought I would finish it. Now I am a part of people who are my friends, and it was good to be given the opportunity of playing with good musicians."

Peter's replacement by Christine, I ventured, had been so obvious I was surprised it had taken so long to happen.

"Yeah," she replied, "everybody individually had thought it a good idea apparently, but nobody had got round to saying it."

"It was stupid," put in John. "We wasted so much time at Kiln House, those two months... with everybody having an extra weight to bear." He had been against the move at first, he went on to reveal, because of the tensions that could have spilled over from the band into their personal lives, but according to them both, "It happily hasn't worked out like that."

Although Christine had jammed with the band at Kiln House, the group's country home of the time, and "knew all the numbers backwards", there still followed a hectic four or five days while they went through the whole act again and learned a small selection of numbers that Christine had played with her old band.

Their first gig was in New Orleans, of which Christine recalls: "I was terrified, but I think everybody else was, too."

Adverse reactions to the loss of Peter Green were minimal, the band maintains, adding that they had never made any attempt anyway to play numbers associated with their former leader.

"In some places," volunteered Mick Fleetwood, "we went down better than we had done on previous tours. Like New York which, up 'til then, had always been a complete blank for us."

On the other side of the country, the Mac also scored a great success at LA's Whisky A Go Go, where they packed the club for five nights running and did such good business that the promoter happily took over all their accommodation bills.

> "IN SAN FRANCISCO, A LOT OF THE KIDS IN THE CROWD WERE MESSED UP ON DRUGS AND FELL ASLEEP"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

AFTER THE SUCCESS of a communal life at Kiln House, which was leased on a temporary basis, the band is now living together in a large Hampshire mansion bought on their behalf while they were away. At the moment, they are having equipment installed so that part of the house can be turned into a studio, and all their future records will be made there. First project then will be a new single and album, although they don't intend to rush either. The rushing and the confusion is over. ***NICK LOGAN***

The newlook Mac in 1970: (l-r) Christine McVie, Kirwan, Fleetwood, John McVie and Spencer

HARRY GOODWIN

RELEASE DATE 18 SEPTEMBER 1970

KILN HOUSE

Green is gone, and his old bandmates head to a commune with Christine McVie and Danny Kirwan. Easygoing vibes, however, only partially disguise ongoing traumas.

BY BUD SCOPPA

THE *KILN HOUSE* saga is bookended by a pair of abrupt departures of key band members, as Christian mysticism trumped rock'n'roll first for Peter Green and later for Jeremy Spencer, in a real-life approximation of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The narrative spanning these bizarre occurrences is fraught with psychological torment that brings a dark undercurrent to the quaint, pastoral, outwardly serene setting. But what resembles the plot of a particularly lurid 19th-century Gothic novel forms the backstory for what stands as the most easygoing and harmonious album in the Fleetwood Mac canon. You can't make this stuff up.

The seeds had been sown for this melodrama in the summer of 1969, prior to the release of *Then Play On*, when Green and Spencer – the former decked out in a white, flowing robe – announced plans for an "orchestral-choral LP" to tell the story of Jesus. "We believe in God, and this is a serious venture," Spencer insisted. While those plans were scrapped, Spencer managed to complete and release a self-titled solo album of what he referred to as "rock'n'roll satire", backed by his bandmates, apart from the increasingly distant Green. The LP stiffed, but the sessions cemented the musical dynamic of Spencer and Kirwan, which they would soon put to inspired use. Soon thereafter, Green announced he was leaving the group and giving a large chunk of the wealth he'd accumulated to charity out of a desire "to lead a freer and more selfless life along Christian principles" – leading his father to not unreasonably grouse in *The Daily Mirror*, "He could do a lot better by buying us a new house."

> A FASCINATING ONE-OFF... THE EVER-MORPHING BAND'S ODDEST, MOST UNDERRATED WORK

The news devastated the band, Spencer in particular. "I didn't feel I could do it," he later admitted. "All I could play was rock'n'roll. Peter was a developed musician. I couldn't do the stuff that people now expected us to play." Danny Kirwan, meanwhile, had issues of his own, even beyond his nascent alcoholism. Christine McVie would later describe him as being "really, really neurotic and difficult to work with, [*and he*] would never look you in the eye... To be around him was a very nerve-wracking thing." Kirwan's mental state wasn't helped by the behaviour of his then-pregnant wife Claire. "She was mad – used to hit him with his Les Paul," according to Green, who had dated Claire before introducing her to Kirwan. Rough treatment for a hypersensitive youngster who was so into the music that he'd played with tears streaming down his face in his early days with the band.

But Kirwan and Spencer's shakiness was counterbalanced by the stolidity of Fleetwood and McVie, both of whom were in stable conjugal relationships at the time. So, rather than packing it in, they decided to go on as a four-piece, fronted jointly by the 22-year-old Spencer and Kirwan, who'd turned 20 in May. Without Green at the helm, they were no longer a blues-based unit, moving by necessity to their youthful prodigies' areas of expertise. Spencer had his so-called "parodies" of his heroes, Elvis and Buddy Holly, while the Beatles-influenced Kirwan possessed the voice of a choirboy and prodigious chops on his trusty Les Paul.

Earlier in the year, at Fleetwood's urging, the band, *sans* Green, had begun an experiment in communal living, moving into Benifold, a once-stately oasthouse in the countryside near the village of Alton, on a six-month lease. Four couples, Spencer's infant son and two roadies shared the pad through the spring and summer, drinking tea, burning through blocks of hash and jamming away in this idyllic if dilapidated edifice on an extended working holiday. They

CRITICS' VERDICT

"I'm not entirely sure I want to hear dreary country songs like 'Blood On The Floor' by anybody, even if it is mildly tongue-in-cheek. But they achieve a marvellously authentic Jeremy Spencer 'Holly sound' on 'This Is The Rock'."

CHRIS WELCH, MELODY MAKER, SEPTEMBER 19, 1970

"It is Spencer who provides the dominant influence over *Kiln House*; having gauged from his solo album which of his parodies work on record and which became tiresome after frequent plays..."

NICK LOGAN, NME, SEPTEMBER 12, 1970

worked up the material for the album they would fittingly title *Kiln House* in the jerry-rigged kiln room, as sturdy songs gradually took shape out of their exploratory jamming. The band grew, too, as Christine McVie put herself to good use during rehearsals, playing keys and adding a complementary third voice to the vocal blend. She would join the band just after the album's completion. They did some recording at the house with the Stones' mobile, but cut the bulk of the LP in the familiar environs of London's De Lane Lea with engineer Martin Birch.

It's clear from the outset of *Kiln House* that this is a radically transformed Fleetwood Mac. Spencer breaks out his Elvis impression on the opening "This Is The Rock", but the band attacks the shuffle groove with enough power and feel to lift the track above a mere goof. Things then get really interesting, as the glacially gradual fade-up of "Station Man", tantalising the listener to crank the volume, builds to a sustained volley of guitar fireworks. As the agile rocker heats up, what had begun as a Band-like roots jaunt on the order of "The Shape I'm In" takes on the syncopated Latin flavour of Santana in a wholly unexpected yet masterful manoeuvre.

"Station Man" is the first of Kirwan's four majestic pieces, along with the soft/loud McCartney-esque rocker "Jewel Eyed Judy", the gently ecstatic instrumental "Earl Grey" and the delectable rave-up "Tell Me All The Things You Do". In these performances, Kirwan gets a sound that is piercing but contoured, muscular but plaintive, and achingly human. Alternating between slide, tremolo and wah-wah effects, his guitars swoop around and soar over Spencer's taut, meaty rhythm lines. When Kirwan stands alongside Spencer on the latter's featured tracks, "Hi Ho Silver" and "Buddy's Song", he's rock-solid and deftly supportive. When he steps forward, Kirwan sails into the mystic, singing and playing with a shimmering beauty that attains the musical equivalent of the spiritual rapture Green and Spencer so fervently sought. The two musicians are so attuned to each other that one wonders what additional magic they might have made together had each not been so emotionally fragile. Of course, they're working atop a marvellously supportive rhythmic foundation in Fleetwood and McVie, brothers in groove who play with supple dynamism and sublime economy.

In light of subsequent events, Spencer's heartfelt "One Together" and his concluding cover of the 1960 ballad "Mission Bell" can be seen not as innocent love songs but as yearning expressions of belief, and eerie foreshadowings of his disappearance the following March in LA and discovery five days later among the Children Of God cult – events that rendered *Kiln House* a fascinating one-off. But during their summer sojourn, this seemingly diminished lineup somehow located a sweet spot between "Maybe I'm Amazed" and "Can't You Hear Me Knockin'". *Kiln House* is the ever-morphing band's oddest, most underrated work, a shooting star blazing briefly but gloriously across the Fleetwood Mac firmament.

TRACKMARKS KILN HOUSE

1. This Is The Rock ★★★
2. Station Man ★★★★★
3. Blood On The Floor ★★★
4. Hi Ho Silver ★★★★
5. Jewel Eyed Judy ★★★★★
6. Buddy's Song ★★★★
7. Earl Grey ★★★★★
8. One Together ★★★
9. Tell Me All The Things You Do ★★★★★
10. Mission Bell ★★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Fleetwood Mac
Recorded: De Lane Lea, London and Benifold, Alton

Personnel: Danny Kirwan (guitar, vocals), Jeremy Spencer (guitar, vocals, piano), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums), Christine McVie (uncredited keyboards, backing vocals, hand-drawn cover art)
Highest chart position: UK 39; US 69

"We've been battered about the head with a giant club."

Whatever next? Jeremy Spencer disappears with the Children Of God in LA. Mick Fleetwood goes on a daring rescue mission into the heart of California's wildest cults. Peter Green fills in, briefly. Bob Welch arrives, stoically. And, in the midst of it all, a glimpse of the Mac's *Future Games* can be detected — of songs that are "very concise, tight little units... It might seem trite to say you like to remember a melody"

TAKEN FROM NME 24/4/1971

EARTHQUAKES WERE tearing up Los Angeles as Fleetwood Mac, a fortnight into their sixth American tour, prepared to fly in from San Francisco for four nights at the Whisky A Go Go. Jeremy Spencer didn't want to go, partly because of the quakes, partly in an irrational fear of what drummer Mick Fleetwood describes as a pallor of evilness, an intangible fog of foreboding that clouds the conurbation of LA.

Fleetwood, hotel room-mates with Spencer on the Mac's tours, attempted to rationalise the guitarist's anxieties.

"Of course it is an evil place," agreed the drummer – recalling his placatory advice as we spoke in his kitchen at the band's Hampshire home – "But we are there on a job, I told him, and it is possible to go in, do the gigs and come out again without touching on the evil elements."

By the time the band arrived in LA, Spencer had apparently got the better of his worries. His behaviour outwardly completely normal, he left the group's hotel, as he often did after checking in, to buy some books in a shop he knew from previous visits. The rest of the band went out to eat.

Returning some time later to the hotel, they were surprised to find that Jeremy hadn't yet got back; their apprehensions building as the evening grew on, it was when it became obvious that they were not going to make that night's Whisky gig that manager Clifford Davis contacted the Los Angeles Police Department.

Sitting in their hotel rooms, worrying and wondering, the band's minds went back to an encounter they had experienced on the streets while on their way to eat. Selling the word of God in the aggressive manner that persists among more extremist sects in LA, groups of religious fanatics had approached them in a certain area of the city. They had been hard put to get away from this forceful street preaching and, knowing Jeremy, feared that on his own his strength of will might not have been as strong as theirs.

The reactions of the LA police to Davis' call for assistance served to back up fears – in time proved well-founded – that Spencer might have become involved with one of these sects. But it was not until four missing days had elapsed that the guitarist was found.

It helps at this point to have some understanding of the complex mental make-up of Jeremy Spencer. There are many sides and paradoxes to the diminutive guitarist whose bottleneck renditions of Elmore James and on-target impersonations of rock'n'roll stars have been a highlight of Fleetwood Mac's stage presentation ever since their emergence as the most successful of the British post-blues boom bands.

Spencer had long been deeply and seriously involved in religion but, at the same time, as a person, he could plumb the depths of vulgarity in a confounding paradox.

"He could be so vulgar, it would make you wince," says Christine McVie. Offstage and on, he could be many different characters – and extremely funny – but to strangers be the most retiring member of the band, almost hermit-like offstage, mumbling and inaudible on.

Yet when, in the stage act, he did his famed impersonations, particularly the one of Elvis Presley, a drastic change of personality came

The Mac, taking flight in '71: new recruit Bob Welch third left

"OF COURSE LOS ANGELES IS AN EVIL PLACE, BUT WE ARE THERE ON A JOB..."
MICK FLEETWOOD

over him. He wouldn't do it every night, though – no matter how much the band tried to twist his arm, or how strongly it obviously went down with the public – but only if he himself felt in the right mood, and felt the right mood from an audience.

In the post-Peter Green period, and after Christine McVie (Perfect) had joined, the band bought him a maroon lamé suit as a hopeful persuader, but Jeremy stuck rigidly to his rule. He did it only once in Britain before the group left for the States, and only on the first and last nights of the time he was there for the US tour.

Clifford Davis supplies this account of the occasion in Britain. With Jeremy offstage, the rest of the band had burst into a straight rendition of "Viva Las Vegas" with Mick Fleetwood breaking off midway through to announce, in best MC fashion, "Here for your enjoyment tonight... all the way from Las Vegas... ELVIS PRESLEY..."

A maroon lamé leg wiggled from the side of the curtain, the rest of Jeremy Spencer, hair slicked back in a rocker's pompadour, bouncing out into the spotlight to complete the lyrics of "Viva Las Vegas".

In this particular show, Spencer was well into his act when a youth in the first few rows rose from his seat, supposedly en route to the toilets. In a flash Jeremy had snapped the fingers on his outstretched arms and killed stone dead the music behind him, gesticulating a hand towards the embarrassed youth in the auditorium and delivering in a slow drawl the killing, "Nobody... BUT NOBODY... leaves here... when Elvis is onstage." Onstage he had that kind of power, offstage he had none.

> "JEREMY COULD HAVE HAD THE COURTESY TO LET US KNOW, INSTEAD OF JUST WALKING OUT ON US"
> CHRISTINE McVIE

RELIGIOUS SECTS, RANGING from the moderates through to a fanaticism which can touch on black magic and Satanism at its furthest extremes, proliferate in Los Angeles. The more fanatical, the more their appeal is based around fear. The word of the Bible is law, and the flames of hell will devour all who refuse their strict path to God.

In cases of missing young people, these sects are immediately suspected by the LA Police Department. There have been cases, according to Mick Fleetwood as told to the band by the police, where young kids, after a haranguing on the street, have virtually been kidnapped by the more fanatical sects, thrown into locked and darkened rooms and kept without food and water for four/five days, until the 'convert' has renounced his former life and embraced his new ideals. Fleetwood and Clifford Davis in no way suggest that such extreme ploys were used to snare Spencer into a religious trap, but it should be remembered that it was against this background that the search for the guitarist went on. Of course it couldn't happen to you or I – hopefully it couldn't – but there are plenty of potential recruits hanging around the boulevards of Los Angeles. Their prey is the young, long-haired, the hippy, the youth possibly washed out after a spell on drugs, possibly just low and looking for a cause, maybe already interested enough in religion to be hooked in the initial approaches... the gullible, the young, the lost causes. Jeremy was certainly into religion and, according to Mick Fleetwood, gullible.

One of the ploys of the sect Spencer was eventually found with, an organisation called the Children Of God, is to harangue passing pedestrians on LA streets. If you don't stop and listen – perhaps you are a Christian but don't have the time – they are prone to scream after you down the street, threatening hellfire of the "You will burn in the fires of hell" variety. It can, according to Mick Fleetwood, be a pretty harrowing experience for the most balanced mind.

For four days the group, Clifford Davis and road managers Dennis Keane and Phil McDonnell, with the aid of the police and various well-wishers, most of them moderate Christians familiar with the methods and whereabouts of the sects, kept up the search for Spencer. Mick Fleetwood tells of one trip, fruitless as it transpired, to a sect which had been forced some 60 miles out of LA by the police for precisely such activities as detailed earlier.

With Fleetwood was a girl from the Whisky A Go Go, a Christian who had offered her services in the search. In effect she was a kind of interpreter, because certain sects will answer questions by quoting texts from the Bible. Dusk was falling as their car approached through an area already given a bizarre and frightening countenance by the earthquakes. "As we approached... I just can't explain the atmosphere... the awful feeling the place gave out." Fleetwood recalls. "It was an experience I will never forget. Thankfully the house was near to and viewable from the boulevard. If it had been up a drive way and off a highway I don't think I would have dared go any further..."

Somehow the sect leaders had gotten word on their efficient grapevine of the visiting party's arrival.

"They always seem to get to know," says Mick, "and we were told by the police that if there are any kids there that shouldn't be, they stick them in a bus and drive them up the hills until the threat has passed."

Barred at the door from entering and given no assistance whatsoever, this thankfully wasn't the sect that had Jeremy. Mick Fleetwood remembers most of all the expressions and pallid complexions of the people that had met them at the door... "So white, their eyes staring through you..."

Many more search parties of this kind were organised before, at the end of the fourth day, a tip-off led the group to the Children Of God's building in LA.

CLIFFORD DAVIS AND roadies Keane and McDonnell comprised the party that followed up the tip-off, arriving at 11:30pm on the fourth day.

At first there was a point blank denial that Spencer was there, and a refusal to let the party in. The white lie that Jeremy's wife Fiona was seriously ill back in England got the trio inside the building. It was after protracted arguing with sect leaders that Jeremy suddenly stepped out of a room and came to meet them. His appearance was startling... his hair shorn and dressed in 'dirty' clothes. His name had also been changed to the biblical Jonathan.

Davis spent three hours with the guitarist, hearing him tell how he had decided he no longer wanted to work; that the world was coming to an end and that he had to put his soul in order first. How he had been approached by chanting members of the sect on the street and gone with them to explore their beliefs.

He showed no concern at all for the rest of the band, says Davis, and said he thought they might have persuaded him against the action he had taken if he had made contact with them at all. "But I must admit," concedes this manager, "that he appeared most sensible during our long talk."

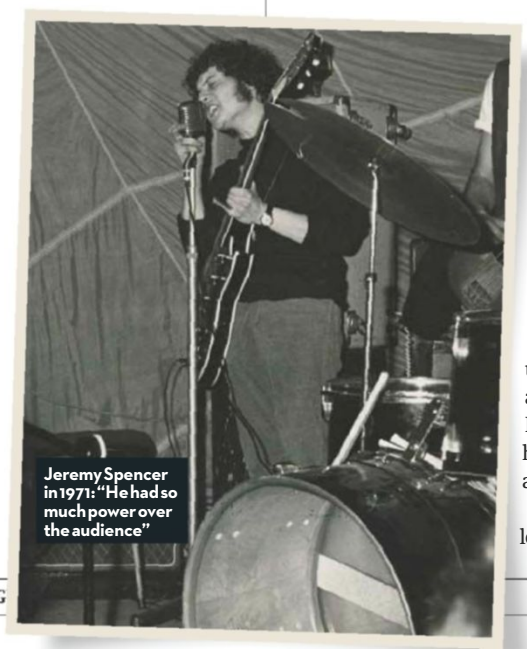
To questions of what would happen to his wife and two young children, however, Spencer would only answer, "Jesus loves... Jesus will take care of them," and all the time that Davis was talking to the guitarist, two fellow disciples of the sect were seated on either side of him, all the while rubbing his arms and repeating a chant like "Jesus loves you."

Davis says his condition and behaviour towards the rest of the sect could best be described as that of a "star-struck child". "It was," says Fleetwood, "as if he had lost his identity. The Jeremy we knew had gone."

Keane, the roadie, went further: "He'd been brainwashed and it nearly killed me to see him. He just mumbled 'Jesus loves you'. He was with about 500 of these people and they're just like vegetables."

The band itself never got to see Spencer. There was talk of a meeting with him the following evening, if it could be arranged, but Clifford Davis' advice against it prevailed. "I feared for their safety," he told me.

Ironically, the tour, in terms of financial gain and audience response, was the most successful Fleetwood Mac have done in the States. Their



Jeremy Spencer in 1971: "He had so much power over the audience"

BILL GREENSMITH

The Mac in '71: *(l-r)* Fleetwood, Bob Welch, Kirwan, Christine and and John McVie

Kiln House album had done better in America than here and, before his disappearance, Jeremy had been playing to his peak.

"He had been really getting everybody else off the ground," remembered Christine when we moved upstairs to the McVie's section of the house. "He was playing like we'd never heard him play before. At the Fillmore West in San Francisco (what was to be his final night with the band) he did his Elvis bit and had the whole audience in the palm of his hand..."

"He had so much power over the audience," broke in John McVie. "That's what I can't understand. If he wanted to spread his beliefs, surely he could have used that power and done it through the group instead..."

Christine: "Yes but it was 'Elvis' that had the power. Jeremy had no power at all." None of them, they stress, mind the course that Jeremy has taken; their objection is to the manner in which he took it.

"What he has done is his privilege," says Christine on behalf of the band. "But he could have had the courtesy to let us know, instead of just walking out on us and leaving us to worry like we did for those four days..."

"Not knowing," adds Mick Fleetwood, "whether he was either physically or mentally still in one piece. That was all we wanted, all we needed to know."

Once reconciled to Jeremy's unalterable state of mind, the group was faced with six weeks of a major tour yet to run, with contracts and gigs to complete that they couldn't conceivably meet in their depleted form. Peter Green, the erstwhile Fleetwood Mac leader who himself left the band for reasons in which his religious beliefs played a major role, was their saviour. Clifford Davis put through an SOS call to the guitarist in England who, true to his pronouncements and intentions when he quit the Mac, had been about to take up a job on a farm.

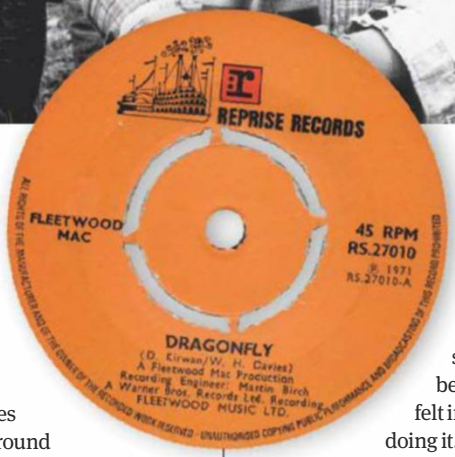
Going back onstage, after so many months' absence, was the furthest thing from Green's mind; yet it was the ties of a still strong friendship that sent him flying out to join up with the band two days later.

Christine points out that if Green had not answered their distress call, their whole careers would have been in jeopardy.

"We would have lost a lot of money, lost this house, everything. It would have been the end, because this house represents everything we've got."

And turning to address herself to her husband: "Everything you've worked for the last eight years, let's face it, it's all tied up in this house."

Meanwhile, as Green was flying out, Jeremy was being transferred to the Children Of God's Texas branch where he was later to be joined by his wife Fiona, reportedly in full sympathy with her husband's ideals, and young son Dicken. Fiona's mother, staying at the Mac house in Hampshire, cared for the younger child. Later, it is known that the Spencers – Fiona doing domestic chores for the sect – were moving round branches of the Children Of God in other major US cities.



FACED WITH LITTLE alternative – there was no time to break off and re-plan their act with Peter Green – Fleetwood Mac were forced into accepting a set comprising three numbers, Green's "Black Magic Woman" one of them, followed by an hour or more's jamming. It was a move taken with great reluctance, but which involved very little choice.

Shattered then by the mental anguish of the days in Los Angeles, they were now being asked to walk onto a stage and face their audiences with the barest semblance of an act.

"We'd arrive for a gig," remembers John McVie, "and suddenly find ourselves onstage staring at an audience without a clue of what we were going to play. We were just scared stiff; it was a feeling I just couldn't properly describe."

Green more than anything else, probably helped hold them together. "He treated it as a bit of a joke," says McVie. "He never spoke much onstage, but occasionally would amble up to the mic and say something like 'Yankee bastards' and laugh. I mean, he didn't have to come back again, but we did. But they'd all applaud at that, and amazingly, the whole act – particularly the jamming – seemed to go down well."

Despite the fact that, after a time, the jamming itself became monotonous and predictable to the band, they were winning encores and building where they had fully expected to be killing a reputation.

"We only had a handful of bad gigs," says John "which is good in an eight-week tour. In terms of going down well and making more money, we were successful and it was our best tour. But the way we felt inside while we were doing it..."

"Peter," says Christine "was so good. You could almost see the goose pimples on people's arms as they were listening to him play. He just used to raise the roof. He is *the* guitarist; it is such a shame that he is renouncing himself."

Drained of energy by the end of the tour, the last date, according to John McVie, had to be the last. They couldn't have gone on any further. And once it was all over, they just fled for England and home as fast as they could go, mentally and physically beaten, morale at its lowest ebb.

"Over the past year," sighed Christine, "it seems as if we have just been continually battered and beaten about the head with a giant club." Mick Fleetwood, succinctly, uses and makes you feel the strength of the phrase "running for home".

I DROVE DOWN TO the Fleetwood Mac house, a large secluded mansion on a hill just past the Devil's Punch Bowl on the A9 just a week after their return. Understandably, they hadn't been near their instruments since they got back, and were just then coming round to picking up the pieces. They'd made no hard and fast decisions on what to do if Jeremy Spencer does return and if, though they think it highly improbable, he wants to rejoin. They discuss it among themselves as we drink coffee.

"It is hard until we talk to him," says Christine. "I would say 'No' because I don't think I can work with him again after what he's done."

"But," John weighs in with his opinion, "if he said he wanted to come back, I think I would be prepared to say yes..."

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Mick, as he sees me to my car, feels that apart from any other considerations they all want to hear it "from the man himself". And that, despite what has happened, he would like to re-establish with Spencer the strong bond of friendship that previously existed.

The first candidate for Jeremy's old job was due the afternoon of the day I called, a guitarist/singer/writer called Bob Welch who has since been chosen as replacement. Also due that day was Spencer himself. Because he lived there, and all his possessions remain in his quarter of the house, it is odds on that he will return there at some point. But the band had no knowledge of his intentions, simply word that he would be back soon – the date has since been put back to later this month. He could be coming for his possessions, to talk to the band or, as is thought highly possible, with the leader of the Children Of God to start an offshoot of the sect in Britain.

NICK LOGAN

TAKEN FROM NME 10/7/1971

THE CHEZ CLUB, Leytonstone – a somewhat characterless high-ceilinged ballroom above an East End pub – is the kind of gig that has been Fleetwood Mac's bread and butter for close on five years. Since the days back in '66/'67 when it was Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, when the blues was their forte and the burgeoning club circuit was theirs to command, the British band has worked equivalents and variations of the Chez Club the length and breadth of the country. Even at the time of "Albatross" and "Man Of The World", they were still insisting on making themselves available for relatively minnow gigs like the Nottingham Boat Club and Fishmongers Arms.

On that front nothing much has changed – the indefatigable Dennis is still there, though dear old Dinky has since gone on to other things and two newer roadies have taken his place. And Mick Fleetwood can still be seen in the same fleck, sleeveless cardigan – the wooden balls still dangling from his belt – that first saw light of day on the first Blue Horizon album.

Elsewhere, however, a lot of troubled waters have gone under the bridge. As manager Clifford Davis muses, while we wait in the tiny, crowded dressing room for local support group Golum to finish: "Everything about this band has changed."

Peter Green and Jeremy Spencer, both ensnared in their consciences, have gone. Christine McVie and Californian guitarist Bob Welch have arrived. Nowadays only drummer Fleetwood and bassist John McVie – Danny Kirwan was a '68 addition – remain of the band formed out of a schism from John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. Much else apart from personnel has changed, too. The circumstances of Green's and Spencer's departures have left their mark.

The blues, at least in its 12-bar blues form, have gone as well, along with Peter Green's assertion once that there would never be a night when Fleetwood Mac wouldn't play at least one 12-bar and Elmore James number. But in its root form the blues remains, mixed with the other influences of five years, pop among them, to produce the music of today's Fleetwood Mac.

Welch, bespectacled with short, fair hair, and Danny Kirwan are now the band's frontmen, their lead guitars working side by side in front of the solid as ever rhythm section of McVie and Fleetwood, strengthened by the electric piano of Christine McVie.

Onstage, the five of them are toiling hard against sound gremlins and the surroundings, the guitars of Kirwan and Welch pushing the band forth in what is now hard and driving rock/blues. For the long-time Fleetwood Mac devotee, there's little material to recognise. Frequently they break off for the pretty, melodic songs born out of their more recent past, and there's a big hand for Christine when she steps up to the mic for her one showcase, her song "Show Me A Smile".

Then they're off again, driving on. Bob Welch cocks his heads on one side and alternatively smiles across at Christine or grits his teeth to complement the guitar. Christine smiles back. Mick Fleetwood, lank hair tucked behind his ears, bends in familiar repose over his drums, face twisted in the involuntary contortions of concentration, but smiling through it.

The Chez Club is riff country, not, one suspects, Fleetwood Mac country, and for a group that's been forced through so many changes and traumas and is now trying to build afresh a reputation for a new band, it's an uphill climb. But they're enjoying themselves. That's obvious. And that's as much a good portent as the strength and assurance of the music itself. They finish on a fiery Welch composition that draws an enthusiastic response, and bow out.

"They don't seem to know what they want, the kids today," reflects Christine afterwards in the crowded dressing room, not necessarily referring to this particular gig. "They don't seem to know how to enjoy themselves."

ONE SUSPECTS THERE'S a bit of a generation gap at work. The original band owed its success to a combination of the musicians' enthusiasm for the blues coinciding with a growing public appetite for the same. If the audiences of then haven't now settled down with their mortgages and kids, then they've moved on elsewhere. On their own admission, Fleetwood Mac today is out of touch with current public tastes; even if they were, they are far from the kind of people who would tamper with their music to accommodate popular demand. But after a spell off the road in Britain through the personnel upheavals, they are now, having returned to the club circuit, back to the proper place for evolving a musical form.

Backstage, there's an inquest about the sound problems: tales are told of a disastrous evening at Crewe earlier in the week where one by one all the amps blew out, bar one tiny monitor. "Every night something goes wrong," says John McVie, before the discussion draws manager Davis to promise prompt attention and the band gets on to lighter subjects like the order of alcoholic refreshment.

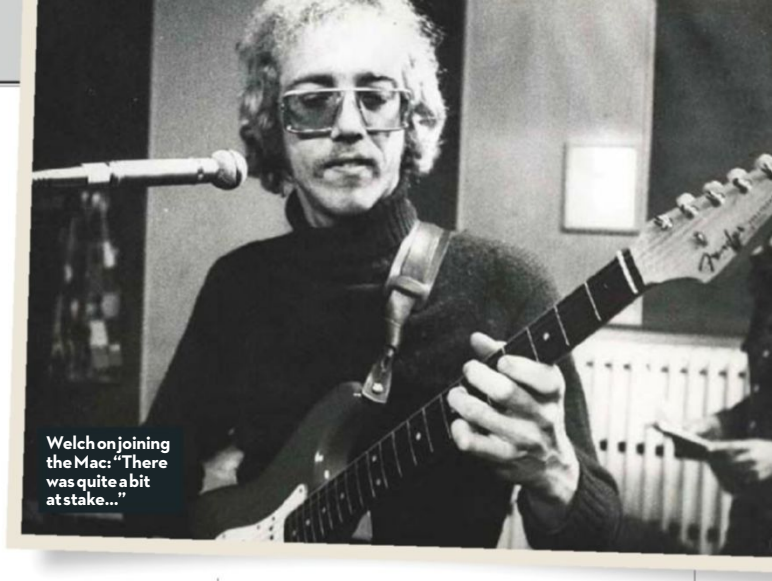
Aside of equipment problems, what I can gauge of the band's morale is high, and outside in the now emptied hall, where roadies are clearing the gear, Christine confirms this impression: "I think everyone is really pleased with what we are doing now. Before, when Jeremy was still with us, it was like a really desperate attempt to make up for the loss of Peter, and everyone felt terribly inadequate and insecure. Everyone was pulling the band in different directions. Bob has been instrumental in bringing us together as a unit."

Despite his previous anonymity, Welch in fact has quite a good pedigree. Arriving with Fleetwood Mac by way of France, he worked for a time as a professional producer on the Continent and consequently has been a boon to the band during the recording of their forthcoming album. Before that in America, reveals Christine, Welch played with a number of soul bands, backing artists like Fontella Bass, James Brown and The Temptations. He was in fact, the first guitarist the group auditioned to replace Spencer, introduced to them through a mutual friend, ex-Jethro bassist Glenn Cornick's Californian wife, Judy Wong.

"There is a completely different element about Bob," continues Christine, sipping a beer amid the debris left by the crowd. "He is not in any bag. His songs are different; his guitar-playing is different; his voice is different. He is like a breath of fresh air to us, because everyone was on the verge of cracking up when Jeremy left, then Bob came along.

The Mac with Bob Welch *(second left)* in 1971

CHRIS WALTER/PHOTOFEATURES.COM



Welch on joining the Mac: "There was quite a bit at stake..."

"We really weren't too sure of him at first. But Bob is such a nice guy and such a good guitarist and I don't think we know yet what his full capabilities are. He's very good rhythmically, and he is such a beautiful guitar player.

"Everyone has suddenly found direction. There had never really been that much direction before in Fleetwood Mac. In the early days, when Pete was in the band, there was direction. But it was direction towards the blues. It was nothing new, though Pete to me is still like *the* guitarist. Now there is a sense of unity; everyone loves what we are doing." ***NICK LOGAN***

TAKEN FROM NME 25/9/1971

BOTH THE PROPHETIC *Future Games* as a title, and the cover photo of the two young children innocently at play, would seem to be apt choices for the current Fleetwood Mac album. Both suggest that there's life and a future in the battle-scarred war-horse yet, as opposed to the final grazing pastures that might have easily been their lot.

In the spring, when the Mac came home from America, and the damaging debacle of Jeremy Spencer's disappearance, the four remaining bandmembers teetered perilously close to throwing in the sponge. Instead they clung on, infused themselves with fresh blood in the form of new guitarist Bob Welch and, taking the gamble of throwing out virtually all their old material, set about starting afresh.

> "BOB'S NOT IN ANY BAG. HIS SONGS ARE DIFFERENT... HE'S LIKE A BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO US"
> CHRISTINE McVIE

It hasn't been easy. Many of their audiences today have no memory of the original Fleetwood Mac and, if they have any at all, it is of the "Albatross" to "Oh Well" period of the band when Peter Green sang about his poignant, self-penned blues like "Man Of The World", and Jeremy Spencer every now and again jumped into the spotlight doing Elvis Presley and Elmore James.

Green and Spencer have both now gone, and with all that material gone too, it has often been a thankless task playing the arduous club tours that have been the group's lot through the summer months. That they've pulled through is confirmed by *Future Games*.

Morale in the band was pretty low when Welch flew in to join them in May. He'd come from Paris on the suggestion of a mutual friend and was, in fact, the first to audition for the vacancy. It was something of a doomy situation for the American to walk into. The band was holed up in its rambling and remote country home in Hampshire, wondering if Jeremy might return, discussing the course to be taken, dourly facing the future.

"I did get the impression of a certain inertia," reminisces Bob Welch with a degree of understatement. "Everybody was just sitting around drinking coffee and I sat there wondering what was going on. I knew, of course, about all the problems they'd had. When I first went down, all they did was talk about Jeremy for a couple of days. As it happened, everything worked out fine, but I got the impression at first that everybody wanted to give it up."

The band had a month and a half to prepare for the first gigs and made an early decision to drop all their old material.

"In a way that was a pretty awesome thing to do," says Welch. "If you are starting out with an unknown band there isn't much at stake, but it seemed to me there was quite a bit at stake. Whether the band existed at all depended on these first few months. The way things have turned out, the band is really strong, but it might not have happened that way."

Welch has proved himself a valuable addition to Fleetwood Mac. As a guitarist, his playing style has given them new breadth and depth instrumentally; as a singer, he's allowed them to spread out with three-voice harmonies and, apart from the title cut itself, he has one other composition to his credit on *Future Games*.

His is a soul and R'n'B background. A Californian, he played for some time with a soul show band, The Seven Souls, around Las Vegas, mainly working in a back-up role to performers like James Brown, Aretha Franklin and Fontella Bass. It was when that band broke up, in Hawaii in '69, that Bob and two others from the Seven Souls set off for Paris, forming themselves into an R'n'B trio they called Head West. But that ran into problems, more personal than musical, and Bob's two colleagues eventually drifted home. He was due to follow them, to take up an offer to record with Stax in Memphis, but felt reluctant to take himself back to the disillusioning LA scene he'd fled from.

"I just stayed in Paris procrastinating," he remembers, "just letting time go by until I finally got involved writing songs for an Italian recording company and with producing this group, and before I knew it, it was January '71 and I was really getting restless about not having played a gig for five or six months. That was followed by a terrible rootless feeling."

Apart from fleeting visits, Bob had never been to England before when he arrived in May to suss out a message from friend Judy Wong that he and the Mac might mutually benefit each other.

"The main thing I placed all my confidence in," explains Bob, "was Judy, who's been a friend of mine and of Mick and Jenny (Fleetwood) for many years. She said why didn't I go out to the house and give it a try. I wasn't exactly on my last legs in Paris, but it was pretty depressing and getting more so."

Under the circumstances – those being that the group had to take into the studio their stage material with no time to develop it for the record – Welch is well pleased with the new Mac album. In a way they now have a surfeit of composing talent. Christine McVie has always been able to turn her hand more than competently to songwriting and Danny Kirwan and Welch are prolific in that department.

"Danny," says Welch, "writes many more songs than will ever be used by Fleetwood Mac, and I do too. I have about 25 songs right now. But it's nice to be in that position, where we can play songs to each other and take a consensus opinion. And the songs we write individually do seem to fit together. They are not diametrically opposed. We seem to have the same basic conception of singable songs.

"IT MIGHT SEEM very trite to say that you like to remember a melody, but Danny and Christine do write songs that are very concise, light little units. There are some groups I respect who take the opposite approach, where the vocal is almost incidental to what is happening instrumentally, but for my part I like vocal songs. And the songs we do are very definitely songs: they could be played on an acoustic guitar."

I asked Bob if their club gigs had given them any insight into the popularity standing of the Mac today. "I don't know about England. I get the impression from what I read that a lot of groups in their own country don't seem to have any longevity. It's almost like planned obsolescence. It's quite frightening the way things go out of favour. Like last September I remember reading about Elton John in *Rolling Stone* – it was the first I'd heard about Elton John – and he couldn't do a thing wrong. I just looked at a recent *Rolling Stone* and he seems suddenly to have fallen out of favour. And it has taken him precisely 10 months or whatever to fall from being their favourite son. He's had his success and that's it.

"That's the discouraging thing about the age of Aquarius. These are the people who are supposed to be practicing the new age, and giving credit where credit's due. But they are worse than the people who do the ads on the television: like, they launch a new product and as soon as it has run its course, they drop it. I find this discouraging, that you have your success only for an allotted time.

"I don't think the audience react so much in this way. With the audiences we have played to in England it has been down the middle. Half have been good, 25 per cent OK and another 25 per cent less than good. But considering that there is nothing in the act that they can identify with, I would think we've had a very good response." ***NICK LOGAN***

CHRIS WALTER/PHOTOFEATURES.COM

RELEASE DATE 3 SEPTEMBER 1971

FUTURE GAMES

Ethereal balladry, progressive folk and — thanks to newcomer Bob Welch — a hint of California anthems to come...

BY MICHAEL BONNER

WRITING IN HIS autobiography, *Play On*, Mick Fleetwood glumly summed up Fleetwod Mac's position in early 1971. "Once again we were a band in need of a guitarist and yet another fresh start." Jeremy Spencer had left the band in February, four shows into an 11-date run at the Fillmore West. After convincing Peter Green to help them finish the tour, the band returned to Benifold – their communal home in Headley, Hampshire – to consider an uncertain future. Across the Channel, meanwhile, an American guitarist living in Paris found himself in reduced circumstances when his band folded. "I was literally sitting in my underpants in a friend's apartment," Bob Welch later told *The Tennessean*. "I was wondering what I was gonna do. I was 24. Maybe I was gonna head back to LA."

As it transpired, a mutual friend connected Welch with Fleetwood Mac and in April the guitarist travelled from Paris to Headley. Welch recalled being met by Mick Fleetwood at the railway station. "He was driving a yellow VW," he told *The Tennessean*. "He was six-foot-six and weighed about 120 pounds. He was a strange-looking human being. Was then. Is now." Welch was surprised to find himself offered a position on the spot. "Bob was the perfect fit," wrote Fleetwood. "He was a California dude, brought up in the Valley, who had fallen in love with R'n'B and jazz."

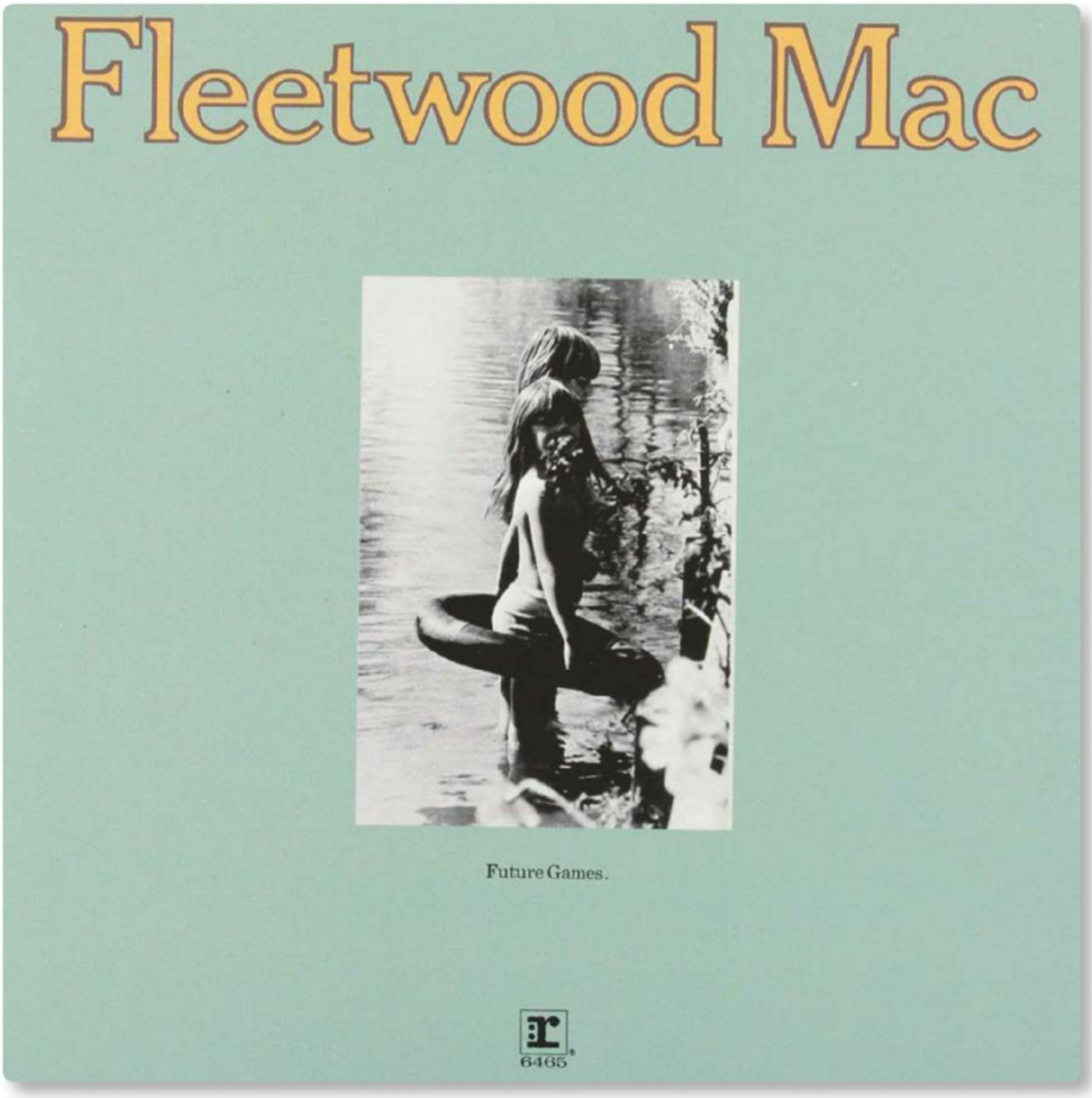
> IT ISN'T EVEN AVAILABLE ON ITUNES OR SPOTIFY, WHICH IS A SHAME AS IT'S VERY BEAUTIFUL

Welch settled into life at Benifold. Danny Kirwan and his girlfriend Claire lived on the third floor. John and Christine McVie had their own wing. Mick Fleetwood and his wife Jenny Boyd occupied the spacious servant's quarters. Trips to the local pub were documented in Kirwan's composition from the time, "Down At The Crown": *"Down at The Crown, everybody's sitting round/ Getting loose with the juice that was flowing."*

Following Spencer's departure, Kirwan had essentially become the band's musical leader. "At first, Danny was like a son," recalled Jenny Boyd. "He used to come and have supper with Mick and me at our flat at Benifold. He was like a little Peter Pan."

"[*Danny*] was very uncomfortable to be around," Welch said in 2003 during an online fan Q&A. "But such a sweet and charming singer and writer." Although not a natural frontman – and, increasingly, drinking to compensate for his shyness – Kirwan's gentle fusion of blues-rock and folky pastorals dominated both *Future Games* and its successor, *Bare Trees*. Christine McVie – a full-time member since the band's American tour of August 1970 – brought her own sophisticated compositions. Welch's contributions were perhaps more wide-ranging. "It was his idea to integrate male and female vocals," wrote Fleetwood. "It became the blueprint for the sound that Fleetwood Mac is best known for. He was a prophet of what was to come."

Over the spring, this latest configuration of Fleetwood Mac worked on fresh material at Benifold before road testing it in June during a short British club tour. At the end of the month, they entered London's Advision Studios to record their fifth studio album. *Future Games* features three songs by Kirwan, two each by McVie and Welch as well as an instrumental credited to the whole band. More than *Kiln House* – which still leaned on Spencer's blues and rock'n'roll tastes – *Future Games* is the first Fleetwood Mac album to substantially break with their musical past. Kirwan's "Woman Of 1,000 Years" unfolds lazily across a misty,



CRITICS' VERDICT

"A mournful, wistful quality has long pervaded their work, probably the result of realising that making a lot of bread and slogging on the road for years is quite a drag, really."

CHRIS WELCH, MELODY MAKER, OCTOBER 9, 1971

"A band jam, 'What A Shame', completes a set that is more a foundation for the growth of a new band than the sum total and end product of their individual potential."

NICK LOGAN, NME, SEPTEMBER 18, 1971

acoustic backing. *"Woman of a thousand years/ How are your sons of a time ago,"* Kirwan sings. *"Do they still admire your silvered ways?"* Lyrically, the song prefigures the kind of witchy narratives favoured by Stevie Nicks. But more pertinent are the harmonised lead lines between Kirwan and newbie Welch: their guitars weave leisurely around one other, their tones warm and discreet. Mick Fleetwood, for his part, sounds a little lost as he periodically strikes a tabla or taps woodblocks together.

Christine McVie's "Morning Rain" appears to directly address the band's changing fortunes – *"Everything's going around in my head/The future's new and the past is dead/Pull out the stops, turn on the light."* Musically, meanwhile, it feels an early pass at those uptempo piano-driven songs like "Don't Stop" that she masters on later Mac albums. The instrumental "What A Shame" is filler; based around a funky guitar groove (featuring added sax from Christine's brother John Perfect), it passes by innocuously enough before Welch's magnificent title track.

At over eight minutes, "Future Games" is mellow, stretched-out psychedelia, carried along by the gentle ebb and flow of Kirwan's guitar-playing. Welch aims for the mystical and allusory: *"I did a thing last night/You know those future games."* Dating from his time living in Paris, it's an unusual compositon for Welch, much closer to the ethereal textures of Kirwan's songs than his own FM radio stylings. More epic folk rock, Kirwan's "Sands Of Time" clocks in at 7:24. While Kirwan evokes a hippy version of the natural world – *"The magic of a blackened night"... "To and fro, the trees will bend"... "We will go right down to the sea"* – his deft guitar lines expand into driving, exhilarating passages.

Kirwan's countrified "Sometimes" foregrounds his deft, melodic playing, but feels like a palate cleanser after "Sands Of Time". Welch's "Lay It All Down" is less successful, a densely produced blues-rock song *"about a man named Moses/Who lived long ago"*. With lyrics chewed out by Welch, it is too mannish for this otherwise gentle, feminine album. The balance is restored by McVie's elegant ballad, "Show Me A Smile", which once again features discreet and intuitive guitar- playing from Kirwan.

At Benifold, the band were living close to the fringes of nature. Welch described the house as "rather spooky and strange, even in summertime". There was no central heating. The grounds stretched for eight acres. No wonder that *Future Games* is rich with ethereal balladry and progressive folk, worked up in Benifold's downstairs rehearsal room. Nevertheless, the album failed to chart – the band had strayed too far from their blues roots, perhaps. Reviewing *Future Games* for *Rolling Stone*, Lloyd Grossman disapproved. "*Future Games* is a thoroughly unsatisfactory album," he fussed. Unfortunately, it seems to be a commonly held opinion – today, *Future Games* isn't even available on iTunes or Spotify. Which is a shame. It's really very beautiful – in a way that no Fleetwood Mac record was before or has been since.

TRACKMARKS FUTURE GAMES

1. Woman Of 1,000 Years ★★★★★
2. Morning Rain ★★★★
3. What A Shame ★
4. Future Games ★★★★★
5. Sands Of Time ★★★★★
6. Sometimes ★★★★
7. Lay It All Down ★★★
8. Show Me A Smile ★★★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Fleetwood Mac (engineered by Martin Rushent
Recorded: Advision, London
Personnel includes: Danny Kirwan (guitar, vocals), Bob Welch (guitar, vocals), Christine McVie (keyboards, vocals), John McVie (bass guitar), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion), John Perfect (saxophones)
Highest chart position: UK n/a; US 91

RELEASE DATE MARCH 1972

BARE TREES

Romantic poetry, sub-zero temperatures and the increasingly difficult moods of Danny Kirwan... Winter comes to Benifold.

BY **DAVID CAVANAGH**

"GOD BLESS OUR *perfect, perfect grey day,"* an elderly woman reads from a poem at the end of Fleetwood Mac's sixth studio album, *"with trees so bare, so bare, but oh so beautiful."* It's not often that the English find beauty in grey weather – let alone perfection in it – but poets, especially the Romantics and Post-Romantics, have always had a more appreciative eye for a bleak landscape. Wordsworth (in "To My Sister") and Hardy ("The Darkling Thrush") both noticed their spirits lifting at the sound of a bird singing in a bare tree; it occurred to Hardy that even on the most desolate winter's day, *"some blessed Hope"* could be gained from listening to that bird.

> THEY WERE NOW MAKING MUSIC FOR A CONNOISSEUR FANBASE, NOT A MAINSTREAM POP AUDIENCE

The Mac were evidently thinking along similar lines. *Bare Trees* is an album whose title, cover photograph and closing poem are all conceptually wintry. Daylight hours are diminishing and an arctic draught blows through Benifold, where the windows are coated in frost. The title track sees Danny Kirwan rise early and potter around outside in sub-zero temperatures, but his mind is on the girl in the cosy bed that he's just vacated. Bob Welch, who must be wishing he'd never left California, is dreaming of blue hills by night and hearing apparitions in the howling gales by day ("The Ghost"). It's a time of year when songwriters rely on metaphors to keep them warm. Welch imagines a girlfriend magically transported to his side (*"But I could look away and you'd be gone"*) and the sugar-sweet song she inspires – "Sentimental Lady" – is like heavenly radiators flooding the album's second side with heat. It's hard to believe Warner Bros in America couldn't make "Sentimental Lady" a hit; it had all the commercial attributes. Welch, clearly of the same mind, re-recorded it for his 1977 solo album, *French Kiss*.

Welch's arrival had stabilised the ship after the crises of 1970–1, but now it was the personality of Kirwan, the more sensitive and withdrawn of the two guitarists, that threatened the band's equilibrium. "With his multiple skills Kirwan can't help being the focal point," noted *Rolling Stone*'s reviewer, Bud Scoppa, who admired *Bare Trees* for its soft-rock textures and subtle range of moods. He couldn't have known that Kirwan, behind the scenes, had alienated almost all of his bandmates.

Welch, in a website chat with fans in 1999, remembered Kirwan as a "moody genius" with no sense of humour, who irritated the others by cadging their cigarettes. If they'd lived in separate houses, it mightn't have been an issue. Two years into the Benifold experiment, Kirwan was running out of supporters.

He and Welch may not have bonded as friends, but the secret of *Bare Trees* – and *Future Games*, for that matter – is the musical symbiosis between the Brixton boy and the Beverly Hills bohemian. Their interweaving guitars are uncanny, choogling gently in opposite speakers ("Child Of Mine"), blowing up a wah-wah storm ("Danny's Chant") and sensing just the right moment for an elegant flourish or a filigree solo ("Bare Trees"). And when they sang, their voices – light, high and feminine – wove silky patterns that shunned the machismo of hard rock, the guttural unrestraint of the blues and the peacockery of the emerging glam scene. Understatement was vital. Shouting

CRITICS' VERDICT

"Even though the guitar is heavily featured, Mac are not a group to perform songs merely as vehicles for instrumental ego trips. In fact, they become too much of a blend of instruments. And surely Mrs McVie could come through more on electric piano."

TONY STEWART, NME, JUNE 24, 1972

too loud would have broken the spell.

The heaviest song on *Bare Trees*, in fact, is sung by Christine McVie. A run-of-the-mill complaint about the tedium of touring ("Homeward Bound"), it pines for a comfortable rocking chair and declares: *"I don't want to see another airplane seat or another hotel room."*

Unfortunately for McVie, she'd be seeing quite a lot of them in the next 26 years. Her other song on the album, the yearning "Spare Me A Little Of Your Love", was correctly identified by *Rolling Stone* as having the potential to be a single, and would remain in the band's set for several years, but like Welch's "Sentimental Lady" it failed to chart in Britain or America. Fleetwood Mac were now making music for a connoisseur fanbase, not a mainstream pop audience.

"Dragonfly", another unsuccessful 45 in 1971, had been composed by Kirwan to the words of a poem by WH Davies, the writer of *The Autobiography Of A Super-Tramp*. It was a feat of dexterity from Kirwan that made "Dragonfly", for all its disappointing sales, one of the most ambitious singles of the year. To repeat the trick on *Bare Trees*, Kirwan selected "Dust", a Rupert Brooke poem about two lovers so ecstatic in their devotion to each other that not even death could prise them apart. Kirwan uses only the first two stanzas (of eleven), but achieves the near-impossible task of fashioning a melody as exquisite as Brooke's language (*"When your swift hair is quiet in death/And through the lips corruption thrust/Has still'd the labour of my breath"*), dosing *Bare Trees* in the Bloomsbury Group and the Georgian Poets even as his colleagues slowly morph around him into West Coast soft-rockers. It was the last song Kirwan would sing on a Fleetwood Mac record.

The album ends with a poem of a different sort. "Thoughts On A Grey Day", a rumination on winter weather and the birth of a baby, is read aloud – a little too quickly and enthusiastically – by a Hampshire neighbour of the band's named Mrs Scarrott, whose joy at the sight of bare trees nicely complements Kirwan's air of tragic melancholy. In January 2015, an enterprising fan on the Mac messageboard The Ledge found out some details about Mrs Scarrott by searching online birth registers. Originally from Eastbourne, Aileen Scarrott was 68 years old and thrice-married by the time she made her appearance on *Bare Trees*. She was the third wife of her husband, Harry, whose voice can be heard behind her. Three marriages each? They were certainly the right couple for a Fleetwood Mac album.

"I thank my God for perfect love and peace," Aileen Scarrott's reading begins. But as *Bare Trees* peeped out into the spring of 1972, immediately to be drowned out by new albums from Deep Purple, Slade and Humble Pie, the good ship Fleetwood Mac was once again heading for the iceberg.

TRACKMARKS BARE TREES

1. Child Of Mine ★★★★
2. The Ghost ★★★★
3. Homeward Bound ★★★
4. Sunny Side Of Heaven ★★★★
5. Bare Trees ★★★★★
6. Sentimental Lady ★★★★★
7. Danny's Chant ★★★
8. Spare Me A Little Of Your Love ★★★★
9. Dust ★★★★★
10. Thoughts On A Grey Day ★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Fleetwood Mac
Recorded: De Lane Lea Studios, London, W1; Mrs Aileen Scarrott's house, Hampshire
Personnel: Danny Kirwan (guitars, vocals), Bob Welch (guitars, vocals), Christine McVie (keyboards, Mellotron, vocals), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums)
Highest chart position: UK n/a; US 70

The Mac in an uncertain musical place: *(l-r)* Christine McVie, Mick Fleetwood, John McVie *(front)*, Bobs Weston and Welch

"There's no reason why we shouldn't stay together for a long while."

July 1972, and the band are enjoying an uncharacteristic period of stability, with songs that Christine describes as "much more mellow than anything we've done before". Three months later, however, the personnel has changed once again, and the sound is getting "harder and gutsier than it was before"! CHRIS CHARLESWORTH valiantly tries to keep up with a band in flux, dreaming of permanency.

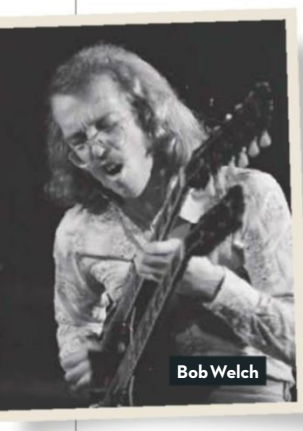
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

TAKEN FROM MM 29/7/72

MICK FLEETWOOD IS overseeing the fitting of a new silencer to his V8 Morgan; John McVie and his wife Christine are painting the hall; Danny Kirwan is away at the seaside, and Bob Welch is at home in the States. It's a typical day in the life of Fleetwood Mac, a band from whom we've heard very little since the departure of Jeremy Spencer to the Jesus cult – but a band who've been getting it together at a different pace from the rest of those who live out in the country. They can afford to relax.

With years of touring and one-nighters behind them, Fleetwood Mac are in the comfortable position of being able to choose when and where they work, instead of accepting every offer that comes along. Right now, they're holidaying between strenuous working spells. Their future schedule is planned carefully and life for the Macs is a far cry from the chaotic conditions under which many bands live.

They've earned their money and invested it wisely in a massive country mansion, miles from anywhere in the rough direction of Guildford. Converted into flats for the use of the Fleetwoods and baby daughter, the McVies and the Kirwans, it serves also as a rehearsal room and, they hope, recording studio in the future. It's a kind of communal home where they can get away from each other if they want to: surely an ideal situation for a band. Bob Welch, the latest addition to the group, who joined on Spencer's departure, lives most of the time in Los Angeles, joining up with the other four when work demands. It's an odd situation, but one that seems to work quite well.


Bob Welch

It's true to say that Mac could have been classed as a 'supergroup' by now, had it not been for the departure of Peter Green when they were on the crest of a wave. At the time, they were one of the biggest draws in the country, and doubtless would have remained so if their personnel had remained stable. Now they seem no longer interested, happy to take things easy and lead orderly lives.

"It is possible that England is forgetting about us," says John McVie, but at the same time he admits that it doesn't really worry him. Mick Fleetwood and Christine agree. Their most recent gigs in this country were at colleges and universities, some of which were successful and others not so successful.

There's another American tour lined up for September, and then a European tour which will include British dates, and December will see them back in America. The same month they'll make a follow up to their current album, *Bare Trees*.

"In England the band don't sell too many albums, although we did at one time. In America, we are a growing band and so it figures that we should spend more time over there," says Mick Fleetwood. "It's a slow process but our albums are selling over there. In England we may sell five or six thousand by the time they are finished, but it's nowhere near what they used to sell. We needed that rest we are having at the moment, because of the last American tour. I'd say we spend about six months every year in the States."

How much did Jeremy Spencer's leaving contribute to the decline in interest in the band? "There were people who were Jeremy's fans, and there were people who were Peter's fans, and they were the front liners so it was bound to affect us," said Mick. "Possibly people knew too much about the band, but possibly when fans see someone leaving they think the band has started to crumble a bit. As far as we are concerned this is definitely not the case. The band is probably a lot more professional musically than it ever has been before.

> "IN ENGLAND, THE BAND DON'T SELL TOO MANY ALBUMS, ALTHOUGH WE DID AT ONE TIME"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

"Jeremy played the Elmore James style of shuffle and rock music, but Danny is much more of a songwriter and naturally the band changes when people come and go. Different musicians are bound to bring different styles with them."

"The new album is much more mellow than anything we've done before," said Christine. "At the time we were happy with it, but it was recorded six months ago and now I'm not so sure. It was out in America first a long time before Britain. You always feel that you can do better after a while."

Christine, too, is against slogging around Britain, playing as many dates as they can.

"In England it means travelling by road and coming home each night in the very early hours, but in America you are staying in hotels. You don't feel it's such a tiring drag over there. If I am away, I like to be away, and that means completely away. We are doing positive stretches of work now and then rest periods, rather than a few gigs and a few days off."

"All of us have had 10 years on the road now and we feel it's better to be organised," said Mick. "We can't sit on our bottoms here forever, but it's not necessary to work as hard as we used to."

Mick agrees that living together in the same house has helped the group a great deal. They had the mansion when Jeremy was with the band, and Mick feels that had it not been for the communal living, the band would have broken up completely by now. They've had the house for two years, and the convenience of living together has paid off tenfold. They have their own rehearsal room, thus saving hire charges, and because they are so far out in the country, noise is no problem.

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

Soon the group will be introducing a Mellotron into their stage act. Christine, who has already played Mellotron in the studio, will be playing one onstage.

"It's just a basic guitar sound and we'll be using it as a background instrument. Bands seem to have a lot of trouble with them on the road but we hope this doesn't happen. The one we've got is specially designed for use on the road."

I suggested that releasing a single might renew interest in the band in this country, but the group had decided against releasing a track from their new album as a single.

"We wouldn't go into the studio to make a single and there's not much point in doing it because we couldn't promote it with Bob being away in America. It might do more harm than good," said Christine. "It's very hard to get plays on the radio."

TAKEN FROM MM 28/10/1972

ANOTHER PAGE IN the turbulent history of Fleetwood Mac was turned last week with the news that Danny Kirwan had quit the group and two newcomers – singer Dave Walker and guitarist Bob Weston – had joined. Few bands have changed personnel as much as the Macs. First Peter Green, rated as one of the best white blues guitarists in the world quit after being

(l-r) Christine McVie, Dave Walker, Bob Welch, Mick Fleetwood, Bob Weston and John McVie, just walking the dog in 1972

disenchanted with the music business. And, two years later, Jeremy Spencer left the band and massive publicity over his decision to join the Children Of God, a California religious sect.

Throughout all this Fleetwood have kept going, despite an inevitable wane in popularity in this country. In the States, however, Fleetwood still command considerable respect. Their last album, *Bare Trees*, won a gold record across the Atlantic, although sales in this country failed to reach five figures.

Christine McVie, wife of Mac bassist John McVie, hopes the present six-strong lineup will reach a state of permanency that other combinations failed to reach.

"I really hope this is it," she said last week. "We all get on extremely well together and there is no reason why we shouldn't stay together for a long while."

Kirwan left, says Christine, because he was becoming increasingly more interested in playing his own material. "He wanted to leave and we agreed it was the best thing," she says. "We found it harder to work together. Danny was spending all his time recording himself with lots of Revoxes, so we thought it was time for some new faces in the band. We met Bob and Dave in America on our last tour and there wasn't any problem about them joining."

Bob Weston was playing with Long John Baldry at the time Mick Fleetwood phoned with an invitation to join, and Dave Walker had been vocalist with Savoy Brown for the past 18 months. Both were looking for new positions.

"I wasn't too happy with the Savoy Brown set-up," said Dave. "I wanted a more cooperative situation, and a better working atmosphere."

At present the new lineup are rehearsing for a series of British dates next month. "There are plenty of new ideas around," says Christine, "but we are going through the material that we are familiar with first. We can't start on a completely new repertoire straight away. We will be doing a new album in January with Dave and Bob on it.

"I think the new group will have a bigger sound than the old one. Already I can tell that it's a lot harder and gutsier than it was before.

"The new material we are coming up with seems a lot harder, probably because Danny was always writing the softer, more melodic material. We have a lot more combinations of music to play around with now because of having two new people, and on top of the instruments we have four singers in the group now. We will use all four voices where it is convenient to do so.

"Dave will do most of the singing, but he can take a break here and there. He won't be regarded as a front line vocalist like he was with Savoy Brown. Now we have four frontmen, because we will all be doing the announcing and things like that."

Would the Fleetwood Mac blues image disappear with the new lineup? "We are all bluesers at heart," said Christine, "and I think we will stay that way. The band is going to change, but not that dramatically."

> "WE ARE ALL BLUESERS AT HEART, AND I THINK WE WILL STAY THAT WAY..."
> CHRISTINE McVIE

Bob Weston (left) and Dave Walker

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

RELEASE DATE MARCH 1973

PENGUIN

More lineup changes prompt a partial re-engagement with the blues. Peter Green guests, discreetly. "Weird," adjudges Christine McVie.

BY PETER WATTS

EVEN WITH THE convenience of hindsight, *Penguin* is a slippery beast. Was it the sound of a band falling apart or one slowly coming together? Perhaps it should be seen as the album that, with an uncredited part for Peter Green, gave Fleetwood Mac a final chance to salute their bluesy past – for "Albatross", see *Penguin*. Or maybe its main significance is that it provided them with a logo, inspired by the penguins that John McVie would admire when he visited London Zoo on his days off. Even the band didn't know what to make of it: Christine McVie thought it sounded "weird"; Bob Welch considered it "obscure".

Penguin was born amid another colourful crisis. While touring the United States to support *Bare Trees*, Bob Welch and the increasingly temperamental Danny Kirwan got into a pre-gig argument about tuning. Not unusually, Kirwan had been drinking. The row escalated, a guitar was thrown, a mirror smashed, and Kirwan ended up spending the gig heckling from the audience while Welch desperately tried to plug the holes in the sound. Kirwan, Green's great protégé and perhaps the strongest musical link to that birthing period, was promptly sacked by Mick Fleetwood, the only member of the band who could still talk to him.

> THIS VERSION OF THE BAND STAYED TOGETHER BARELY A YEAR, MAKING JUST ONE ALBUM

Once more, the Mac had lost a guitarist and gained a dilemma. Kirwan had become their principal songwriter, and to replace him the band elected to recruit two new members: guitarist Bob Weston and singer Dave Walker. Both came from a blues background. Weston had played the circuit supporting Mac with Long John Baldry's band, while Walker sang raucously with Savoy Brown. His addition marked a serious attempt by the band to solve the perennial problem of their lack of a distinctive voice, even if the intention was to use him as just one singer among four.

In interviews, Christine McVie said they were looking to get "a lot harder and gutsier", yet as they began recording in January 1973, using the Rolling Stones Mobile Studio at their shared Benifold house, this older bluesy vibe proved remarkably difficult to assimilate into the band's now smoother sound. As their biographer Donald Brackett writes of this era, Fleetwood Mac were "perpetually breaking up, over and over again, in slow motion", and this version of the band stayed together for barely a year, recording just one album.

Tellingly, it's old hands McVie and Welch who dominate *Penguin*'s early stages, kicking off with McVie's bluesy choogle "Remember Me", a fine pop song about love confusion. *"I want you and need you, I don't know what else to say,"* sings McVie, and that lyric nicely captures the album's mood – it's very determined, but nobody seems quite sure why. Weston immediately finds his feet, supplying understated harmonica and banjo, and McVie's second contribution is even better, the excellent "Dissatisfied", with its chorus lamenting a failing relationship that undercuts the uptempo country-soul melody. Between comes Welch's "Bright Fire", which begins with Floydish atmospherics before settling into a spacey groove, as Welch weaves a sanctuary from Mac's combustible politics. *"Don't let the violence blind you, you're gonna come through alive,"* he insists.

The first side ends with Dave Walker's big moment, hitting the mic like he's been waiting forever and belting out the Holland-

CRITICS' VERDICT

"Christine's songs contain much more of her personality, especially when delivered by the lady herself. 'Remember Me' opens up in this laidback melodic rock idiom, contrasted well with her rough, bluesy 'Dissatisfied'."

TONY STEWART, *NME*, MAY 26, 1973

"The future? On the strength of *Penguin* it looks bleak – the bite that their first two albums had, before Green and Spencer left, is missing. *Penguin* is a wishy-washy affair without soul or direction."

MP, *MELODY MAKER*, JUNE 9, 1973

Dozier-Holland cover "(I'm A) Road Runner", a 1966 hit for Junior Walker & The Allstars, with all the gusto of a Marquee debut headliner. Walker gives it plenty, but the band sound unconvinced that they want to reprise the days of playing sweaty London clubs. That's confirmed by the next song, Walker's second and final contribution to the Fleetwood Mac story. "The Derelict", written and sung by Walker, with Weston tootling away on harmonica, is a country-tinged and self-pitying weeper that sounds like a Band B-side. Walker isn't bad – though the group would later claim he spent much of the sessions "drunk and disorderly" – but his earnest, overbearing style is completely at odds with the disengaged mood found on the rest of the record. Walker would not last much longer. Fleetwood Mac, having stared down the barrel of dissolution so many times, had no fear of change.

Welch attempts to restore momentum with "Revelation", a funky affair with a "Black Magic Woman" feel and religious undertow. It's the best song on the album, with some magnificent playing by Welch. McVie and Welch's co-written "Did You Ever Love Me", peculiarly supported by steel drums and with inconsequential harmonies from Weston, drops the ball, although for the third time in as many songs McVie sings teasingly about the bitter fag-end of love. *"Please leave me softly, I won't say goodbye,"* she insists. One wonders what the bassist in the corner made of that.

Welch's "Night Watch" is clearly envisaged as the centrepiece of the album, six minutes of drama with an uncredited contribution by Peter Green, another example of Fleetwood Mac toying with a safety belt from their past as they pondered a deeply unpredictable and probably rather unattractive future. "Night Watch" has its fans and it is certainly atmospheric, with impeccable sound, but it's not terribly interesting. Like an awful lot of *Penguin*, nothing happens, prettily. While that can be sustained for three minutes, it starts to drag when stretched to six. Part of the problem is Welch's lack of sustaining voice; this is one track that might actually have been improved with Walker roaring over it.

A pleasant but ultimately pointless instrumental closes things. "Caught In The Rain" has the subtly downbeat feel of "Puff The Magic Dragon". It was written by Weston and provided at least an opportunity for him to show he had something to contribute, grasping the band's sense of atmosphere, their eagerness to play with variations on soft rock melodies, even if it lacks conviction – entirely understandably in the circumstances. And despite all the inconsistencies and the general confusion, *Penguin* did pretty well, selling more records in America than anything else the band had done, even if it flopped once more at home. *Penguin* was, ultimately, just the sound of Fleetwood Mac carrying on.

TRACKMARKS PENGUIN

1. Remember Me ★★★
2. Bright Fire ★★★
3. Dissatisfied ★★★★
4. (I'm A) Road Runner ★★
5. The Derelict ★★
6. Revelation ★★★★
7. Did You Ever Love Me ★★
8. Night Watch ★★★
9. Caught In The Rain ★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Fleetwood Mac and Marin Birch
Recorded: Rolling Stones Mobile Studio
Personnel: Bob Welch (guitar, vocals, bass), Bob Weston (guitars, banjo, harmonica, vocals), Christine McVie (keyboards, vocals), Dave Walker (vocals, harmonica), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums), Steve Nye (organ), Ralph Richardson, Russell Valdez, Fred Totesant (steel drums), Peter Green (guitar)
Highest chart position: UK n/a; US 49

RELEASE DATE 15 OCTOBER 1973

MYSTERY TO ME

A period of transition. Comings, goings, break-ups, affairs, and the songwriting craft of Christine McVie in perpetual ascent.

BY JON DALE

BY LATE 1973, Fleetwood Mac should have been hitting their second stride. The group were several years out from losing both Peter Green and Jeremy Spencer, a double hit that would have destroyed most groups; they'd pulled together with Bob Welch and Danny Kirwan on the rebound, recording two flawed but at times masterful albums, *Future Games* and *Bare Trees*, before sacking Kirwan and replacing him with Dave Walker and Bob Weston. Walker fell by the wayside relatively quickly, but Weston stuck around long enough to be part of the sessions for *Mystery To Me*, an album that tries to act as a consolidation, of sorts, of the group's move toward a more radio-friendly, down-the-line approach, with their blues beginnings feeling more like an aesthetic shading, a rough outline or guideline to be filled in with Welch and Christine McVie's increasingly confident song fantasias.

MYSTERY TO ME IS A CURATE'S EGG, AN ALBUM THAT DOESN'T QUITE REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL

But *Mystery To Me* is ultimately a curate's egg, an album that doesn't quite reach its full potential. It's perhaps too easy to blame the artwork for setting the listener on edge from the start: designed by Modula, who were also responsible for artwork for Curved Air and Camel, it's an eyesore to say the least. On the front of the record, a crying gorilla eats cake on a beach; a sage is accompanied by a penguin on the back (the latter surely an allusion to the preceding *Penguin* album, its sleeve also designed by Modula).

With the benefit of hindsight, this album reflects an indecisive group unsure of quite how to position itself. Welch is sometimes framed as the "transitional member" of Fleetwood Mac – the singer-songwriter who shepherded the group through uncertain times, before Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks stepped in to push the group to the next level – and *Mystery To Me* similarly comes across as transitional. It's somehow out of step with its times, and also out of step with itself, as though the Mac aren't quite sure of exactly who or what they want to be, even as Welch supplies one of his signature songs here, and the quality of Christine McVie's writing is in perpetual ascent.

If *Mystery To Me* sometimes feels a little underwhelming, that's also because it's top-loaded by its best songs. The group might have lost their overt blues focus, with the songs of Welch and Christine McVie pushing them closer to the FM radio stylings of the Buckingham/Nicks era, but the melodrama of the first lineup's most potent songs is still there in Welch's opener, "Emerald Eyes".

It's when you hit McVie's songs that the album really opens up, with "Believe Me" shifting tempo two-thirds of the way through, leaping from a sprightly pop shuffle into a regal zone that one wag compared to Popol Vuh at their exalted peak. "Just Crazy Love" shares with McVie's later, more popular songs a deceptive breeziness – the tension and longing at the heart of McVie's lyrics is often displaced by the charm of her melodies, and "Just Crazy Love" feels like a template for the peaks of *Rumours* and *Tusk*.

Welch's finest song on *Mystery To Me* is "Hypnotised", a song that became an FM radio staple – released as the B-side to "For Your Love", radio presenters favoured it to the lead track. It shares with Welch's best songs a mysterious lilt, an oxymoronic

'precise vagueness', where the song's structure is clear and tight but its emotional contours, buffered by the gentle reverb that coats the production, are hazy, uncertain – a perfect reflection of the lyrics: *"Seems like a dream, got me hypnotised."*

It makes the move to "Forever", with its clacking drum machine and watery, reggae-esque guitar, all the more jarring. This is where *Mystery To Me* starts to suffer a little. The next run of songs, including the Welch-penned, McVie-sung "Keep On Going", the initially promising, ultimately unfulfilling blues shuffle of "The City", and the pro-forma rock moves of "Miles Away" all signal middling fair. (Though the lyrics to "Miles Away", with its complaints about *"too much Warhol hanging on the wall"*, and where *"all those Hare Krishnas turned out to be a joke"*, are certainly intriguing.)

Things bottom out with the next track, "Someday", where the appearance of a sleazy vibraslap and a jarring, right-angled guitar arrangement can't quite save the longueurs of the song. If anything, by now Welch's main deficit – the relative thinness and characterlessness of his voice – is readily apparent. It seems he would have been better served to gift his songs to other vocalists, like McVie, to perform, as with "Keep On Going"; this was, however, something rarely done in the Fleetwood Mac hierarchy.

As if to prove the point, McVie's return to centrestage, on the gorgeous lament of "The Way I Feel", lifts *Mystery To Me* markedly. It's followed by the pop smarts of Welch's "For Your Love", the album's single, then McVie's breathtaking "Why" which closes the record. From its opening slide guitar, "Why" grows into a slow, graciously paced ballad. Richard Hewson's string arrangements are at their best here, cossetting the song into the deep melancholy of its closing minute.

If *Mystery To Me*'s relative coherence suggests a group at peace with itself, or at least safe from crisis, appearances were false. The McVies' marriage was falling apart, and guitarist Bob Weston was having an affair with Mick Fleetwood's wife, Jenny Boyd.

The fall-out from all of this emotional turbulence was surreal, to say the least. With a devastated group out of commission, manager Clifford Davis put together a fake Fleetwood Mac to meet touring commitments; lawsuits subsequently flew between the manager and the group, leading to more downtime for the already hobbled group.

The revelation of the Weston-Boyd affair meant that Weston was soon out of the group, and when Fleetwood Mac returned in 1974 as a four-piece they would release an album, *Heroes Are Hard To Find*, that hewed closest to Welch's vision. But that is, as they say, another story entirely...

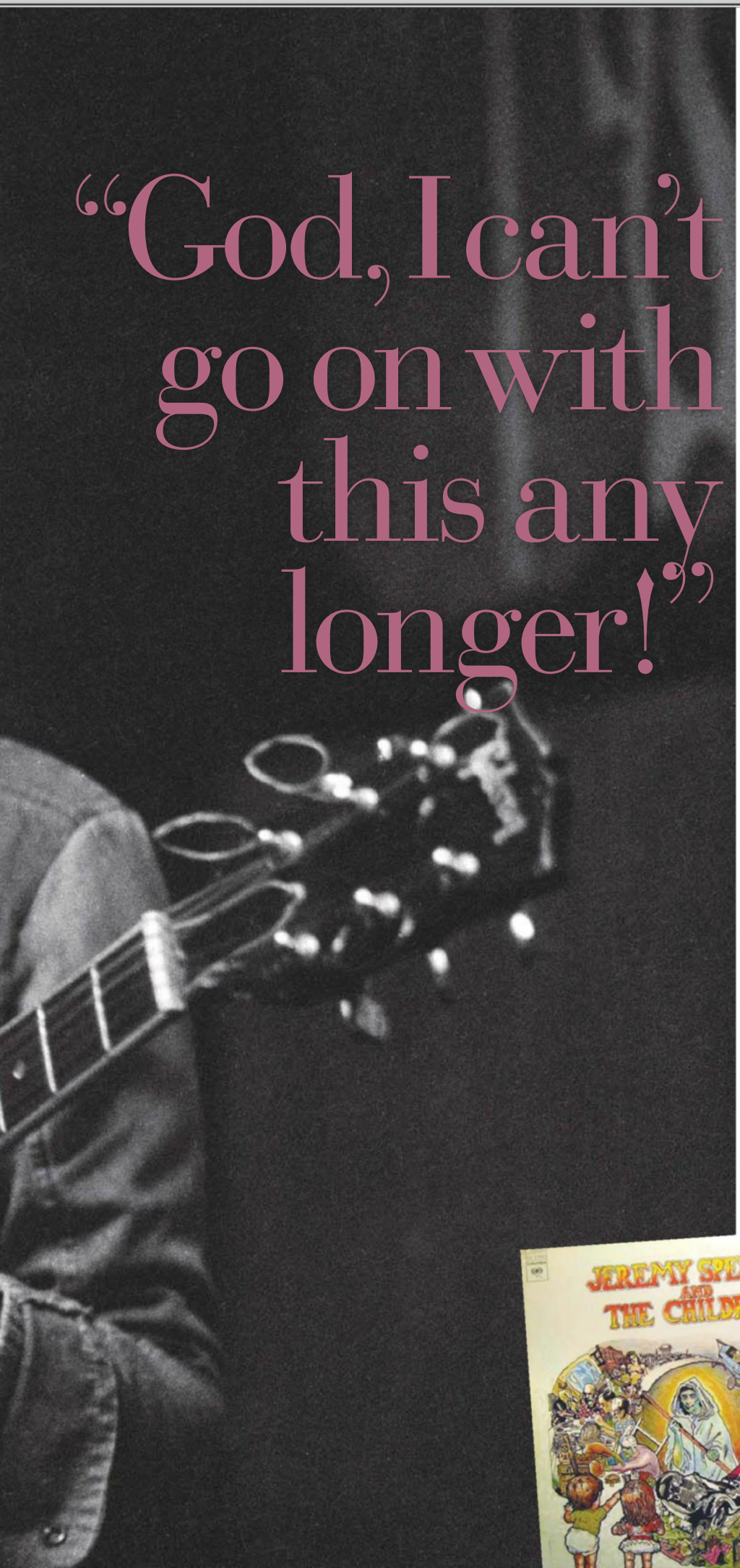
TRACKMARKS MYSTERY TO ME

1. Emerald Eyes ★★★
2. Believe Me ★★★★
3. Just Crazy Love ★★★★★
4. Hypnotised ★★★★
5. Forever ★★★
6. Keep On Going ★★★
7. The City ★★★
8. Miles Away ★★★
9. Somebody ★★
10. The Way I Feel ★★★★
11. For Your Love ★★★
12. Why ★★★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Fleetwood Mac and Martin Birch
Recorded: Rolling Stones Mobile Studio
Personnel: Bob Welch (guitars, bass, vocals), Christine McVie (keyboards, vocals), Bob Weston (guitars, backing vocals), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion), Martin Birch (acoustic guitar on "Keep On Going"), Richard Hewson (string arrangements)
Highest chart position: UK n/a; US 67

Going his own way: Jeremy Spencer live in London, late '74

"God, I can't go on with this any longer!"



Along with his new Children Of God bandmates, the prodigal Jeremy Spencer returns to London to tell all about how the first Fleetwood Mac fell apart — a fraught tale of Jesus, acid, insecurity, Peter Green, the devil, the blues and why he ran away from the band on the streets of LA. **STEVE CLARK** takes confession.

TAKEN FROM NME 5/10/1974

ABOUT THREE O'CLOCK on a late February afternoon in 1971, Fleetwood Mac's Jeremy Spencer walked out of a Los Angeles hotel with the intention of buying some books from a bookstall he'd known from previous visits. The band were two weeks into their sixth American tour – their most successful to date even though their former leader Peter Green had quit some two years earlier – and were due to start a four day season at LA's Whisky A Go Go. Spencer didn't show for that evening's gig and by the end of the night the group's then manager Clifford Davis contacted LA's Police Department.

Five days later Spencer was found, a member of a religious colony calling themselves the Children Of God whom he has stayed with ever since, completely disassociating himself from Fleetwood Mac.

At the time, Spencer's behaviour was likened to that of a vegetable. Davis was first to see him at the Children Of God colony and staggered out describing him as a "star-struck child" – while another report claimed he was "walking around in a daze like a zombie".

Today, nearly four years on, Jeremy Spencer is back in London and can sometimes be found hanging at the Poorboy Club, a Children Of God meeting place in Finchley Road. That was where I met him, and

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

where he talked about that day in Los Angeles, the events leading up to it and Peter Green's last years with Fleetwood Mac.

Jeremy Spencer's hair has started to recede and a bald patch is evident on the crown of his head. Otherwise he hasn't changed much. He stands with a Gibson SG in his hands, one of his left hand fingers covered by a steel slide, rehearsing a blues in a corner of the cosy basement club, just as he did on stage with Mac nearly four years ago. Wearing green cord bags, an oversized denim shirt that serves for a jacket over a turtleneck sweater, Spencer still looks a slightly comic figure – mainly because of his small stature and the childlike expressions he pulls on his angelic face.

Accompanying him through this uptempo shuffle that could be Otis Rush's "Homework" are other members of Spencer's new band, Jeremy Spencer And The Mountain Children. All are members of the Children Of God and with the exception of the drummer – an English kid from up North – they're Americans. They all exude good health and clean spirits, but throughout our conversation not one of them tries any conversion numbers.

With Fleetwood Mac, Spencer was renowned for his strange, almost schizophrenic behaviour. Offstage he was the group's most distant member, but when he went into his Elvis impersonations, complete with lamé suits and slicked back hair, he was completely extrovert. There's a story that while was going through one of these routines on his last Fleetwood Mac American tour, a member of the audience got up to take a leak, and Spencer was so outraged that he immediately stopped the music, gesticulating at the guy about to leave and yelling, "Nobody, but nobody, leaves here when Elvis is on the stage."

He says he still goes through the Elvis routine now and then, although his live appearances are, for the moment, restricted to The Poorboy – the only exceptions being the recent Windsor fiasco and a gig in Birmingham. Shades of the split personality come through during our conversation; sometimes he's loathe to talk, yet moments later becomes loquacious. When Pennie Smith takes some pictures, he stops midway through a number to ask her what her star sign is.

Seated opposite the rest of The Mountain Children, Spencer says that he returned to England in July after being away three years. During that time he's lived in Texas, Los Angeles and Seattle, and recently spent some time on the Continent playing with a Children Of God band. In those three years his only recorded output was an album CBS issued in 1972 titled simply *Jeremy Spencer And The Children Of God*. Of it, he has this to say: "It's awful. It's horrible. For a start they mixed it on huge great speakers that had bags of treble. Finally, when the record was pressed, it had no presence at all. It was just like mud."

Also he's not too fond of the last Peter Green/Fleetwood Mac album, *Then Play On*. "It wasn't complete. It didn't have that humour. It seemed to be where all the intellectuals were. That's why it didn't sell as well as the first one over here.

But didn't Green say it was the best thing he'd ever been involved with? "He said that about everything – it's what you have to feel about your latest thing, otherwise what's the point of going on?"

SPENCER SAYS FLEETWOOD Mac were drifting apart at that time and hesitantly names God as the cause of the group's separation. "I think it was God. I had no inspiration. I couldn't think of anything new. I was just doing Elmore James. I just couldn't think of anything else. I don't listen to all Elmore James anymore. I used to think he was the end. I still like him but it's with more perspective. There was nothing to really sing about anymore. So if I sang about a girl, what girl? I could sing about my wife."

But you wrote on *Kiln House* (Fleetwood Mac's first album after Green's leaving)?

"Yeah. They were just... one was about the Lord. That song called 'One Together'."

Spencer pauses and goes on to talk about the Mac split in more detail. "I don't know what happened 'cause you see he (Green) didn't want to ride on a sinking ship – what he thought was a sinking ship. Like there was 'Albatross' and there was 'Man Of The World' and there was 'Oh Well' which was like a peak. Maybe it wasn't such a commercial type song but..." – Spencer changes his attitude – "Really the peak was 'Albatross' in a lot of people's eyes. That's all they knew Fleetwood Mac for.

"Then there was 'Green Manalishi', his song about the devil. Generally people want music to lift them up. I don't think people want music that is down. If they did, blues would be in the Top 10."

> "ALL MY QUESTIONS WERE BEING ANSWERED BY THE BIBLE... IT WAS EASIER THAN HERMANN HESSE"

It seems Spencer seriously started thinking about God on the group's first American tour – after he took his first acid trip. Before that he read the New Testament occasionally, out of curiosity more than anything else, but it was the acid that opened him up.

"I didn't take a whole lot – a couple, two or three times. Things became really clear. You start seeing things. I'd never thought seriously about death or my life or anything and then when I took it... I saw all of it. I thought being a musician was pretty heavy, but even that didn't matter when it came to dying. It just freaked my mind. Pete didn't take any until the second American tour." Did it change him? "Oh yeah, and then there were all these girls he got mixed up with.

"He didn't want to be associated with Jesus really, and I think the rest of the band didn't want to have much to do with it. A lot of things they wanted to do clashed with my outlook on life, not just things they said. We got these disagreements over certain issues, moral things. That's the whole reason for the split. You get in this position when you're with a lot of people and you're close... and you start smoking dope together and you get in touch with them real close. Then you find that you're not really that close after all."

And Green's quitting the band?

"I don't know why he left exactly. It looked like it was coming up. He met some of these people in Germany – I didn't have anything to do with it – but we took some acid and played some music. It was pretty weird. I didn't like what he was playing. He was jamming away like on *The End Of The Game* (Green's solo album). See, I just disagreed. At first we all agreed on the blues. We all agreed on rock'n'roll. That's all the foundation we had and if you don't agree musically, that's the start of the end. I didn't particularly like jams.

"There was no point in trying to stop him leaving. He wanted me to take over. I didn't feel I could do it... it was just too much."

Too much responsibility?

"Partly. There just wasn't the agreement. Everyone tried but it just wasn't working. All I could play was rock'n'roll. Peter was a developed musician. I couldn't do the stuff everyone was coming to expect us to play. Danny (Kirwan) could play, but he didn't have the stage presence that Pete had – to make people turn round."

Coupled with Spencer's crisis of confidence was a certain amount of confusion over just what to believe in, other than a basic belief in Jesus. "I was reading a lot of spiritual books that were telling me this and telling me that. I believed in Jesus but a lot of books were saying different things."

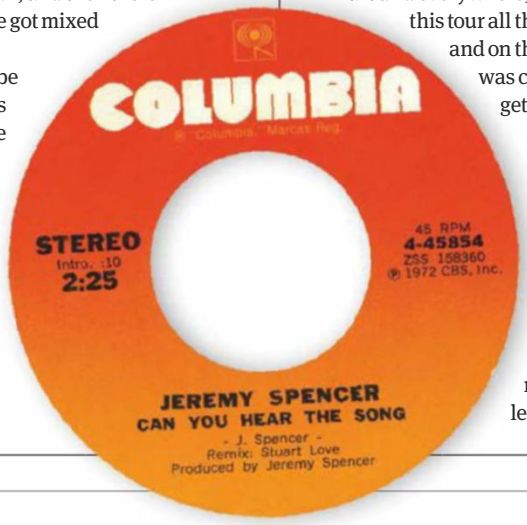
Spencer's mental anguish came to a peak on that last American tour.

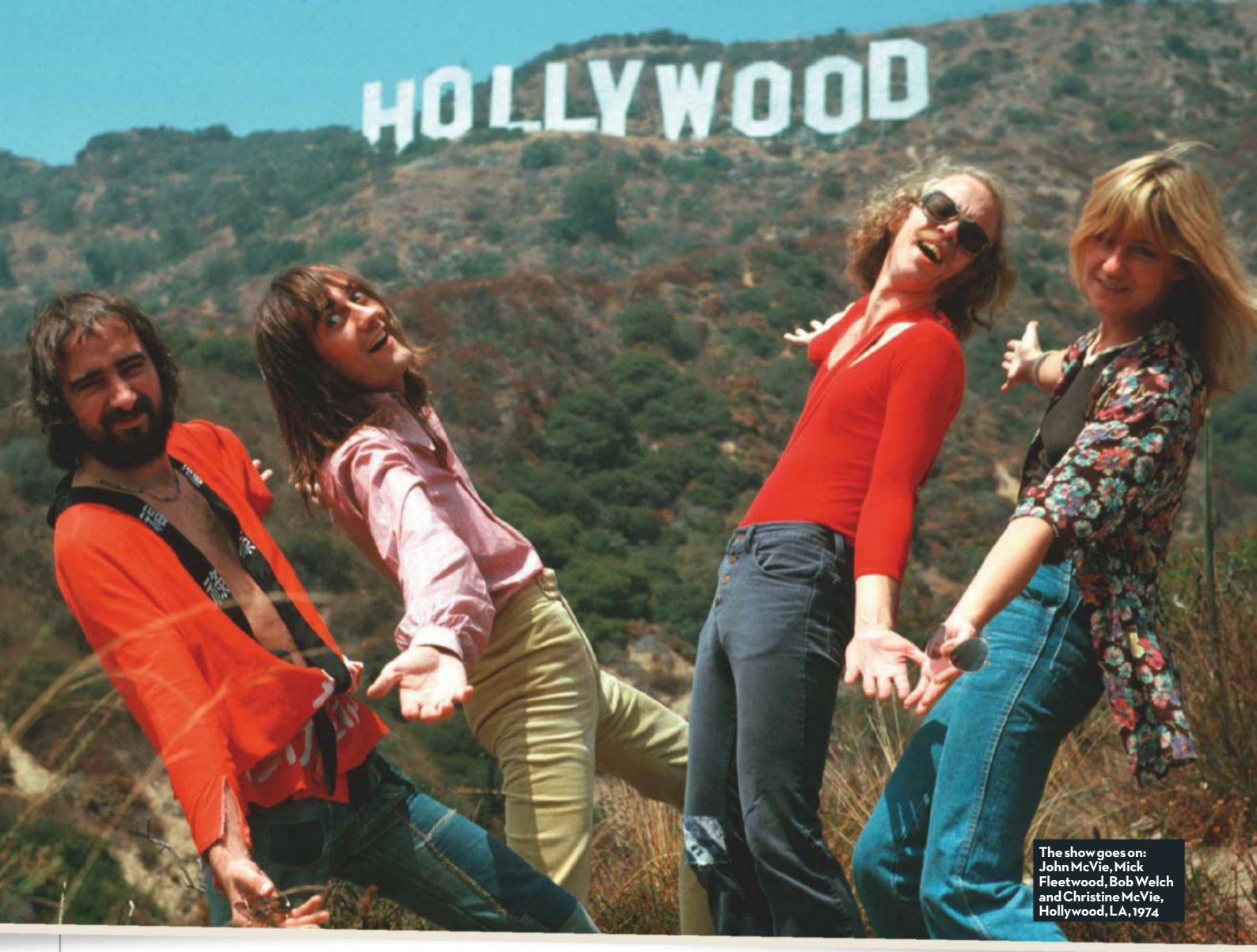
"I asked God before I left for the tour to somehow make a change and show me something."

Two evenings before Fleetwood Mac were due to play LA, the group were in Seattle. There Spencer confided to some of the audience – who were also Jesus-freaks – just how he was feeling, "I'd never told anyone else that I felt I couldn't go on much longer with the band, but I felt I could tell them. It really shattered them because they really liked the band. So they prayed with me..." Spencer burst out laughing which could be an indication of just how self-conscious he is about talking religion.

The next gig was at San Francisco's Fillmore West. "We were going down OK out of respect more than anything else. We drove there in this big Rolls-Royce. It was different from the first time we went there – then the music was really heavy blues, we didn't have very much money and we weren't in the best hotels, and we weren't driven around everywhere, but it was more real. On this tour all the trimmings were there and on the surface everything was cool, but somehow it was getting empty."

After that night's gig the band went back to their hotel and listened to a cassette of a show recorded when Green was with them. "We listened to 'Black Magic Woman' and there were these really incredible guitar leads. Then some things I





The show goes on: John McVie, Mick Fleetwood, Bob Welch and Christine McVie, Hollywood, LA, 1974

MICHAEL MONTFORT/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

did came on and I couldn't stand listening to them. I said, 'That sounds horrible. It sounds like shit.'"

Spencer again burst out laughing, and the rest of the room joins in with him. He continues: "Maybe to some people it sounded good, but how could I go on with it? I just had to leave. I went to bed and said, 'God, soon. I can't go on with this any longer!'"

The band flew into LA the next day and the city was more bizarre than usual, having recently been ravaged by earthquakes. "That's the worst place I've ever been in. I cursed that place – the rotten, stinking, filthy, shithole," he says, and yet again the room erupts with laughter.

Now he's serious once more and continues: "I was at the end of my rope. We go to the hotel and I was just in a world of my own. I couldn't relate to the rest of the band. They were really nice to me. They really were concerned, but I just couldn't explain to them how I... what I was going through. I couldn't even explain to my wife."

And then came the walk to the bookstall, when Spencer was approached by a member of the Children Of God.

"This boy Apolus came up with a guitar and asked if I wanted him to sing me a song. Of course I thought here's someone trying to push a song. He knows who I am," Spencer grins and there's more laughter. "But he'd never heard of Fleetwood Mac. His band was The Beatles and that was it. He didn't seem like a regular freaked-out doper. There was something pleasant about him.

"So he sang a song, said: 'Do you believe in Jesus?' I said: 'Yeah.' He said, 'Have you ever asked him into your heart?' and I said I hadn't – but I had a few times. See, I didn't feel anything. I was expecting stars and explosion."

Spencer then prayed on the street with Apolus and went to a nearby skid-row mission where The Children were hanging out.

"I just had the feeling that was it. He talked to me all evening, and all my questions were being answered by the Bible. Sometimes I wouldn't understand, but I accepted it. I accepted it a lot easier than some of the things Hermann Hesse was saying."

He says he realised that it was getting near the time he was due onstage at The Whisky but nevertheless stayed at the mission.

"The playing was something that wasn't quite important. By rights I should really have phoned."

Spencer remembers the scene when manager Davis and two of Mac's roadies found him five days later. "I was wearing an old pair of trousers that were too big for me and I'd had my hair cut. It was like a soap opera. Clifford took me aside and in this gentle voice said: 'Now I know what's wrong with you spiritually, but can't you follow these people in your spare time within the confines of the group? I'm not concerned about Fleetwood Mac, about the money. I'm concerned about you as a friend. What about your wife and family?'

"He told me to take a holiday and go anywhere I like. Everybody from the colony came down and started singing songs. He was shouting: 'These people don't care about you.'"

Davis eventually realised that there was nothing that could change Spencer's mind and split. Fleetwood Mac cabled Peter Green, who agreed to come out and finish the American tour. Spencer didn't see the rest of Fleetwood Mac until nine months later when they were doing a gig in Seattle. "They were doing OK. Mick (Fleetwood) was quite sweet."

Didn't they feel let down?

"I suppose they did, but it all worked out. Their album sales in America are still going up. Last time I saw them they were recording *Mystery To Me*.

"They were happy. I talked to them, gave them some of our literature which I think they get regularly. That's when I saw Pete. That was really sad. He could hardly play. He picked up a guitar to try and do something. He was totally out of it, just smoking and drinking."

Have you seen him since?

"No." Spencer sounds very despondent.

Do you know what he's doing?

"I think he goes to The Speakeasy. I talked to him a few times about us (The Children), but he just doesn't want to know. It's almost like a they're-not-going-to-get-me attitude. He's Jewish and he thinks because he's Jewish any faith in Jesus is impossible. He probably thinks he can get enlightenment by doing lots of things. Doing things like working in a hospital, or digging graves or helping old ladies cross the street."

RELEASE DATE 13 SEPTEMBER 1974

HEROES ARE HARD TO FIND

Bob Welch's valiant last stand, as the band move to California and Mick Fleetwood catches the sound of things to come.

BY **PIERS MARTIN**

AS 1974 BEGAN, Fleetwood Mac found themselves adjusting to life as a quartet for the first time. With Bob Weston expelled from the fold for carrying on with Mick Fleetwood's wife, Jenny, all ties severed with manager Clifford Davis following the legal wrangles ensuing after his bungled bid to take a 'fake' Fleetwood Mac on the road, and two full studio albums, *Penguin* and *Mystery To Me*, released in 1973, the pared-down Mac had flushed a lot of rubbish out of their system – perhaps more than they realised.

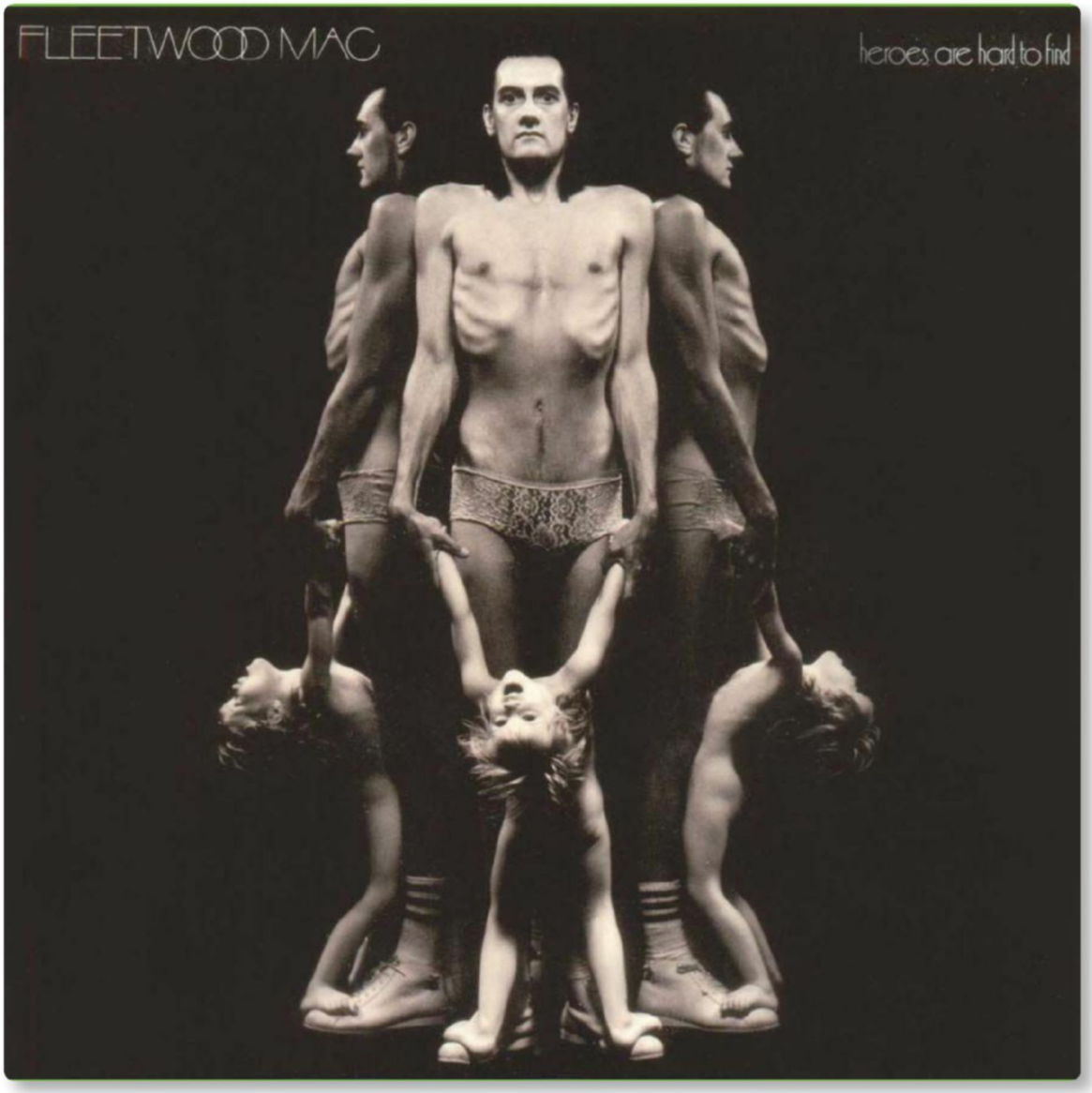
Hindsight kindly allows us to view the band's rudderless early-'70s period as a bout of queasy listing that led directly to that hallowed moment when Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks calmly took the tiller, but *Heroes Are Hard To Find* suggests that this particular short-lived incarnation did at least enjoy something approaching a harmonious relationship in the studio. Despite their stylistic and personal differences, the two songwriters Christine McVie and Bob Welch – now lead guitarist and frontman – each contribute fine material that complements the qualities of the other. Welch's neat cosmic rock dovetails surprisingly well with McVie's sophisticated piano ballads. Together, too, there is a splash of chemistry: on her "Bad Loser", for example, his guitar shimmers across the boogie tumbling along below.

> "THIS IS WHAT KEEPS THAT BAND GOING – THERE IS A LOVE/HATE THING GOING ON"
> BOB WELCH

Often overlooked, and still to this day unavailable on iTunes and Spotify, *Heroes Are Hard To Find* languishes in the long shadows cast by the following year's *Fleetwood Mac* and then *Rumours*. Consciously or not, this ninth album finds the band explicitly toying with the pop form and acts as a stepping stone between the shamanic blues of the past and the dreamy AOR of the Buckingham-Nicks era. Its striking cover photo also breaks with Mac tradition and alludes to the fortunes to come: photographed by LA snapper Herbie Worthington, who would shoot the iconic covers of *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours*, an emaciated Mick Fleetwood is pictured totemically in black and white in a three-way mirror, naked save for a pair of lace knickers and shoes and socks, holding his three-year-old daughter Amelia as she stands on his shoes. The underwear, we're informed, belonged to his friend Sandra.

More revealing is Worthington's back cover photo, which captures the band in boozy bonhomie in the manner of a Caravaggio painting – for here an amused Welch is positioned as the outsider with the McVies and Fleetwood turned towards him, laughing. This would turn out to be Welch's final album with the band. He quit at the end of '74 blaming the strain of touring and, only much later, the constant friction with the McVies.

"Part of the reason I left in '74 was for all the reasons I've always given – needing to try my luck, wanting to do harder rock, being 'burnt' from the lawsuit – but the part I never talked about was needing to get away from them," Welch explained in a Q&A session on the Fleetwood Mac fansite The Penguin in 1999. "This is what keeps that band going – there is a love/hate thing going on, like there is in many families. You want to get away, you want to say something, but somehow clear communication 'straight from the shoulder' never happens."



Welch maintained that he was effectively running the band with Fleetwood in '74 and part of the success of *Heroes Are Hard To Find* – it became the band's first US Top 40 album – must lie squarely with him. The comparative disaster of *Mystery To Me* led the guitarist to propose relocating the band to Los Angeles to foster a healthier relationship with their parent label Warners, who had yet to properly break the band in the US, where they were now best known as a touring outfit, their profile in the UK having diminished. Pieced together in July at LA's Angel City Sound, *Heroes Are Hard To Find* became the first Mac album to be recorded entirely in the States, and though the opening title track, padded with horns and, for a McVie cut, an unnaturally feelgood flavour, failed to make an impact as its lead single, one senses the Californian positivity radiating from these 11 songs.

Welch left the band on a creative high, contributing seven tracks that demonstrate the breadth of his ability. Side One's volley of "Coming Home", "Angel" and "Bermuda Triangle" pulls his "Hypnotised" template in three directions, spanning Hendrix-infused tropical psych, strung-out soul and beach-hut sunset funk, each characterised by Welch's yearning to be somewhere else and his ongoing fascination with all things celestial. The side closes with McVie's "Come A Little Bit Closer", a lovely number boasting a chorus embellished by a soaring pedal-steel guitar line played by The Flying Burrito Brothers' Sneaky Pete Kleinow. He also pops up on Welch's "She's Changing Me", a blue-eyed Big Star shimmy in which the star-gazer sighs, *"Here she comes, and they call her the sweet Omega/And you'll come to know the meaning of her stare."* Elsewhere, the wonderful "Silver Heels" is classic Welch: *"If I could sing like Paul McCartney, or get funky like Etta James, I'd never change,"* he sings over a prowling groove and burrowing John McVie bassline. He signs off *Heroes Are Hard To Find* with "Safe Harbour", a respectful nod to Peter Green's "Albatross", but not before McVie's "Prove Your Love", with its cascading chorus and rambling Rhodes.

Cool, coherent and kind of wild, in many ways *Heroes Are Hard To Find* does sound like a warm-up for the game-changing records that were to succeed it, but it exudes an exotic charm all of its own, one that Fleetwood Mac would never really emulate, because they'd never need to. Fleetwood first encountered the music of Buckingham and Nicks in 1974 as he checked out studios in Los Angeles in which to record *Heroes Are Hard To Find*. After Welch left the band just before Christmas that year, leaving the core trio, neither party had much to lose in joining forces. No-one could have predicted what came next, of course, but in the rush to glory, it's a shame this album came to be forgotten.

TRACKMARKS HEROES ARE HARD TO FIND

1. Heroes Are Hard To Find ★★★
2. Coming Home ★★★★
3. Angel ★★★★
4. Bermuda Triangle ★★★★
5. Come A Little Bit Closer ★★★★
6. She's Changing Me ★★★
7. Bad Loser ★★★
8. Silver Heels ★★★
9. Prove Your Love ★★★★
10. Born Enchanter ★★★
11. Safe Harbour ★★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Fleetwood Mac, Bob Hughes
Recorded: Angel City Sound, Los Angeles
Personnel: Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion), John McVie (bass), Christine McVie (vocals, keyboards, Rhodes electric piano, ARP String Ensemble), Bob Welch (guitars, vocals, vibraphone), Sneaky Pete Kleinow (pedal-steel guitar)
Highest chart position: UK n/a; US 34

RELEASE DATE 11 JULY 1975

FLEETWOOD MAC

Two auspicious new recruits usher in the imperial phase. "Stevie and I had aspirations," admits Lindsey Buckingham...

BY **SHARON O'CONNELL**

IF THERE'S A defining characteristic of Fleetwood Mac's imperial period, it's the extraordinary degree to which they subordinated the personal to the professional. The peak, of course, came with the notoriously embattled *Rumours* in 1977. But were it not for Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham's determination, three years earlier, to ignore the widening cracks in their relationship and hold out for their shared dream, Fleetwood Mac would never have broken America with their 10th album.

In 1973, the couple – who had moved to Los Angeles from San Francisco after their band Fritz folded – found themselves living hand-to-mouth in one room, Buckingham practising guitar and playing the occasional session while Nicks worked as a waitress and cleaner to support them. They'd been offered a deal with Polydor and recorded their debut album, *Buckingham Nicks*, but it was given such minimal support by the label that it swiftly whimpered and died. By the end of 1974, Nicks was fed up with being poor and was considering going back to college. Something had to give.

> "WE WERE WASHING $100 BILLS THROUGH THE LAUNDRY. WE WERE RICH OVERNIGHT"
> STEVIE NICKS

The chance came thanks to yet another exit from the endlessly revolving Fleetwood Mac door – that of guitarist and singer/songwriter Bob Welch, who left in December. The story of how Mick Fleetwood found the replacements who so dramatically changed the band's fortunes has become a kind of folk tale that varies slightly according to which band member tells it, but producer Keith Olsen is key. Fleetwood was looking for somewhere to record the next album and visited LA's Sound City Studios. There, to demonstrate his own production skills and let Fleetwood hear what the room sounded like, Olsen played "Frozen Love" from *Buckingham Nicks*.

Buckingham's epic shredding impressed Fleetwood and he was invited to join the band almost immediately. But despite the fact that their personal relationship was on the skids (which they were careful to keep to themselves), the guitarist made it clear he and Nicks came as a unit. He also had major concerns about the duo's creativity being subordinated if they signed up. "Stevie and I had aspirations," he explained to *The Independent* in 2007. "We hadn't given up. There was a lack of clarity about exactly what our role would be with Fleetwood Mac." Nonetheless, a month or so after Welch quit, the lineup that was to catapult Fleetwood Mac into superstardom was launched.

After two weeks spent rehearsing with the new members, work on *Fleetwood Mac* began in Sound City and was finished by March of 1975. If the bedding-in period was tricky, it certainly doesn't show. In fact, evidence of the rightness of the Buckingham/Nicks fit is overwhelming.

The guitarist's mercurial, blues-pop style is an obvious commercial indicator and, with hindsight, casts Welch in a kind of caretaker role. And Nicks's voice – which ranges from a slightly girlish, sun-kissed rasp to something darker and more forcefully anguished – is a terrific complement to Christine McVie's gently smoked, alluringly elastic alto.

That dreamy harmonising is very much in (soft) focus on "Rhiannon", the album's 24-carat centrepiece, written by Nicks before she joined the band, after she'd read Mary

CRITICS' VERDICT

"Having had a triumvirate of truly fine lead guitarists – Green, Spencer and Kirwan – lost in action, they've decided to abandon the guitar hero syndrome. A new direction finds Fleetwood Mac freewheeling much closer than ever to the (lucrative) mainstream of soft pop-rock"

ROY CARR, NME, SEPTEMBER 27, 1975

Leader's supernatural novel, *Triad*. It also features Buckingham's mix of classical and folk fingerpicking and, on release as a single in 1976, sealed the idea of Fleetwood Mac's sound in the popular imagination for all time.

The other Top 20 singles were McVie's lilting "Over My Head" (released in the US; the UK went with her Maria Muldaur-ish "Warm Ways" instead) and the bittersweet "Say You Love Me". Released as the B-side to Buckingham's country-rock "Monday Morning" in 1976, that song leans on a see-sawing riff picked out on piano and banjo, adding a mesh of acoustic guitar and Byrds-like electric chiming.

Two album standouts were not singles. One is Nicks' lowering "Landslide", which was written in 1973 when Buckingham Nicks had just been dropped and she was staying in Aspen. It's a heavy mix of doubt, regret and bloody-minded determination to pursue their dream.

As she told *Performing Songwriter* magazine in 2013, the song marked a galvanising moment: "In one of my journal entries [*from that time*], it says, 'I took Lindsey and said, "We're going to the top!"' And that's what we did. Within a year, Mick Fleetwood called us and we were in Fleetwood Mac making $800 a week apiece, washing $100 bills through the laundry. It was like we were rich overnight."

The other highlight is the Buckingham/Christine McVie-penned "World Turning", a freight-train blues number with a tribal feel, where the engine of John McVie and self-confessed "tom-tom maniac" Fleetwood is crucial. Less convincing are "Blue Letter" – a souped-up, ersatz Eagles number written by brothers Michael and Richard Curtis (and one of two demos cut with their friends Buckingham and Nicks in the early '70s) – and the chugging, bar-room-blues lite of "Sugar Daddy".

The spotlight that history subsequently shone on *Fleetwood Mac* obscures the fact that, at the time of its release, the world wasn't instantly bowled over. In fact, it didn't hit No 1 in the United States until September of 1976, and the first three singles failed to chart at all in the UK.

In America, the band broke through into the public consciousness by spending six months on the road; a tough, no-frills experience that turned fractures in the Buckingham/Nicks relationship into chasms and propelled the McVies' marriage to divorce.

By the time the record had made Fleetwood Mac a household name in America, work had already begun on its follow-up, despite the chaos that raged about the band like a dazzling but emotionally ruinous storm.

Rumours proved that energy was nowhere near burned out.

TRACKMARKS FLEETWOOD MAC

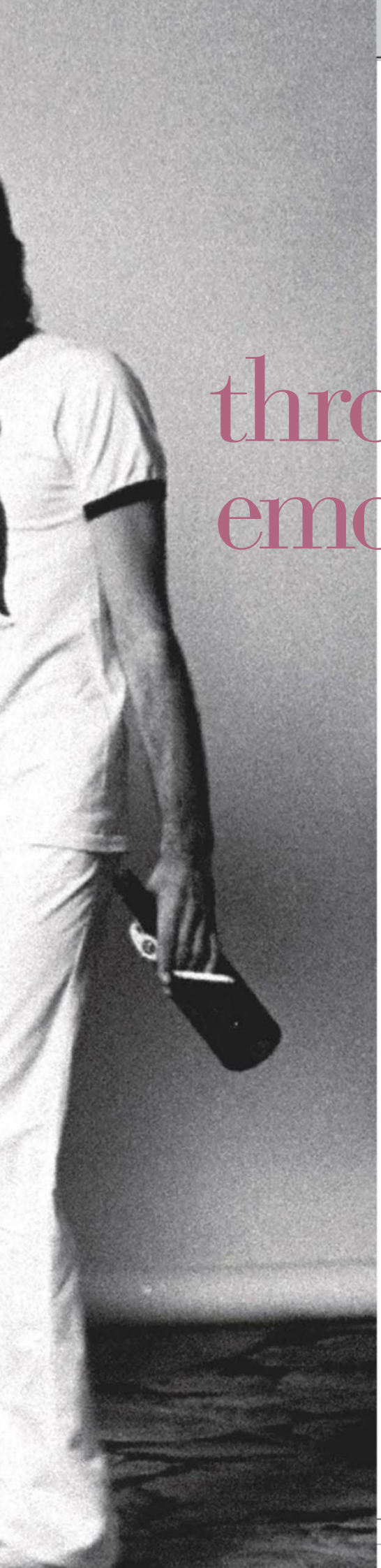
1. Monday Morning ★★★
2. Warm Ways ★★★
3. Blue Letter ★★
4. Rhiannon ★★★★★
5. Over My Head ★★★★
6. Crystal ★★★
7. Say You Love Me ★★★★
8. Landslide ★★★★
9. World Turning ★★★★
10. Sugar Daddy ★★
11. I'm So Afraid ★★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Keith Olsen and Fleetwood Mac
Recorded: Sound City Studios, LA

Personnel: Lindsey Buckingham (guitars, banjo, vocals), Christine McVie (keyboards, synthesiser, vocals), John McVie (bass), Stevie Nicks (vocals), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion), Waddy Watchel (rhythm guitar on "Sugar Daddy")

Highest chart position: UK 23, US 1

Lindsey, Mick, Christine, Stevie and John, holding it together in '76



"The whole band's gone through a complete emotional trauma"

1976 has been "weird for everyone", says Mick Fleetwood. New recruits Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks have split up. Fleetwood himself has got divorced. And, a probing **CHRIS SALEWICZ** discovers, John and Christine McVie have broken up, too. At home in LA, they consider the whole torturous story so far, at the very moment they are becoming huge in the States. "It's a very involved, sensitive unit. Always has been."

TAKEN FROM NME 31/7/1976

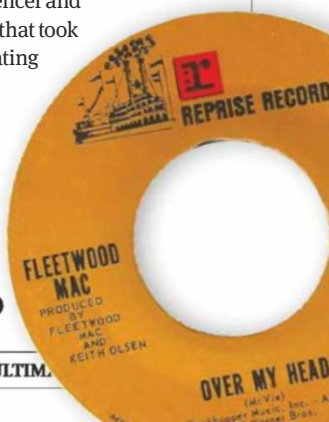
THE YELLOW CAB has taken me just over half the distance down to 6565 Sunset Boulevard before I notice the driver look in his rearview mirror and see I'm no longer going through my notes. We get to talking some. When we reach Fleetwood Mac's publicist's offices, the driver leaves his cab at the kerbside and comes on in. Before he quit the music business and came back to the States, he used to be an old drinking mate of John McVie's in London. Odd things like that happen in LA.

Fleetwood Mac stands at No 3 on the US album charts this week. Last week it was No 2. Next week it might be No 2 again. *Fleetwood Mac* has been playing musical chart positions with the American Top 6 album places for the past three months.

It's almost a year now since the record was first released and became Fleetwood Mac's first-ever Top 10 US album. It had its run and dropped down to somewhere around the 40 spot. Meantime the band followed up its release by working out on the US road for a solid five months. *Fleetwood Mac* started climbing the charts once again. Two Top 20 singles have been taken from the album – "Over My Head", and "Rhiannon" with new girl Stevie Nicks on lead vocals. "Say You Love Me", cut one, side two, of *Fleetwood Mac* is at 43 with a bullet this week. *Fleetwood Mac* has gone double platinum in the States. Over two million units sold. In Britain it's done 5,000 copies maximum.

I didn't even know what they were called the first time I saw the group. I just remember walking into a university union in the north of England in 1967 and lovin' the hell out of this band up onstage playing Da Blooze. Or as close to Da Blooze as The White Man was coming nearly 10 years ago.

Really though, it was almost downright weird the reaction that Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac – as they were then billed – used to inspire in an audience. Not adulation at all, in fact. Loyalty, fraternity, love... I dunno. Call it what you like, but there was some alchemy connected with those five guys – Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer and (later) Danny Kirwan – that took some of their magic floating around them and gave a little piece of it to every member of the audience so they went home really buzzing. Maybe it was because they just looked (dare I say it?) totally approachable



JULIAN WASSER/THE LIFE IMAGES COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

Good Guys – they seemed made to be identified with – as much as down to the way their music *steamed*. Anyway, there was something there that got me going to see them what seemed about every three weeks for close on 18 months.

Then "Albatross" came out on the Blue Horizon label and made it as a No 1 single just after Christmas of 1968. And shortly after that things seemed to be starting to get weird for Fleetwood Mac. Peter went funny and to the Lord. Jeremy – here in LA, one day in February 1971 – upped and strode off to become a Child Of God in circumstances reminiscent of, as Mick Fleetwood observed at the time, a "bad B-movie".

It was very depressing, all that. What really brought you down, though, was knowing that if they'd stuck it out with that same lineup for another couple of years or so Fleetwood Mac were right on course to be a mega-sized world-class group right up there with the Stones and The Who.

JOHN McVIE lies half on the floor, half on a beanbag, with a baseball cap pulled down almost over his eyes. Chainsmoking Doral throughout the interview, he looks very wired up. Nothing more than mere exhaustion, though. Nothing that an afternoon in a hammock wouldn't sort out, he reckons.

Mick Fleetwood wears a stovepipe hat, a plaid shirt, jeans and a new beard. Suntans can be very deceptive. He's completely grounded, too. All five members – Mick, John and Christine McVie, plus new guitarist Lindsey Buckingham and vocalist Stevie Nicks – have been existing on five hours' sleep a night for the past few weeks, finishing off the next album for September release. Two days after this interview, they begin a US tour in Kansas City where they've already broken CSNY's 39,000 ticket sales record.

I tell the bassist and the drummer that the constant sense of upheaval surrounding Fleetwood Mac has often led me to believe that maybe the band has been jinxed in some bizarre way. John McVie, who leaves almost all the talking to his rhythm partner, nods.

"Sure, that's a not unreasonable comment," agrees Mick Fleetwood.

And finally it's as if with this album maybe all that's been pushed out of the way...

"Ten years. Yeah."

But did you ever get the feeling that you'd been hexed?

Fleetwood's voice is speedy with tiredness. The mid-Atlantic accent drops off and grows closer to the Home Counties after a few minutes of speech: "Not a jinx. Just circumstance. Very interesting." You find yourself wondering quite quickly if Mick realises how often he uses the word "interesting".

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

"I mean, I can see how for someone from outside you could call it a jinx or just... Shit. It's been very... unusual. Not just an average rock'n'roll band. Disregarding anything to do with music, you know. Everything has always been very sensitive. Not blunt. The things that have happened have been very... unblunt happenings. They've been highly intriguing, you know, to people looking on, and I can understand why.

"It must make the band a very interesting band," he laughs. "If you happen to take an interest in it."

But did you ever get to a point where you sat back, put things in perspective and thought, 'What is going on?' There must have been some point when you focused it all...

"Well, I think – usually from a very humorous way of looking at things – we've thought, 'My God. It's a bit strange for all these things to be happening.' But it hasn't fazed me. I mean, they're just things you have to accept and either you do or you don't, you know?"

He appears to make a conscious decision to be less diplomatic:

"It's just a real lesson in human workings. Which is far more interesting than... a lot of people. It may have been a strain from time to time but it is very, very interesting. It's not a Jack The Lad band of people going out and bashing about – it's a very involved, sensitive unit. Always has been."

Ah, the metaphysics of the rock'n'roll unit, eh? And, of course, you finally moved over here two years ago. Why did you finally decide to make the move?

"We weren't working in Europe anyhow... Nothing to do with, you know, hiding money or the tax system – although obviously you do benefit from that if you do it. It was just one of keeping a momentum going that was just getting to be a big ritual of coming over here, touring, going back to England, sitting on your arse, coming over again...And it just wasn't doing anything. Nothing was changing. It was becoming a syndrome.

"And we decided to record *Heroes Are Hard To Find* (the album prior to *Fleetwood Mac*) over here and everyone found that it just wasn't getting the same sensation as sitting in the Hyatt House. And there was more to America than sitting in hotel rooms staring at mushroom caps and steaks.

"And that was just about it. Either you liked it or you didn't. And all of us... Chris had reservations. But she's been back to England. John's been back to England. And there's no desire to be back there at all. It's a negative thing to say but I don't think England's a very healthy place to be if you're trying to say something."

John speedbursts in: "The bullshit you read in the papers like the MPs saying how all these pop musicians and artists who leave the country in our hour of need should be deprived of their citizenship... I mean, it's the people who are leaving who give a shit. But reverse the situation and they'd do exactly the same thing. Anybody would. I mean, it's your life, you know? Try and make yourself happy."

Mick: "It's just atmosphere..."

John: "The apathy in England..."

Mick: "If it gets better, it's going to be a long time before it gets better. And... that's it. It's a drag."

Ah, don't let it bring you down. It's only empires burning.

Although, of course, your views could be moulded more than a little by your success.

"Yeah, of course," nods Mick Fleetwood. "It's great. But the actual fact that the whole money thing is different... See it's happened to myself and John before, you know. Psychologically it's the same. You know, the band had an incredible following of people that were very, very loyal to the band. And then suddenly we started getting huge hit records. And did amazingly well for two and a half, three years in Europe. The band was a very, very, very large band.

"But the way it happened, the sequences were the same. The band were a band working doing what they wanted to do. We had a huge-selling album before we even had a murmur of a hit single in England. It works the other way around for most bands: they get lucky and get a hit record.

"But it wasn't that: we had a really good grounding. A very strong base to work from in England. That's exactly what happened here. It's taken longer. It's taken seven, eight years. But the people have always bought the records. They've always come to see us. They've always taken an interest. The nucleus has never left. And we've survived. Now the next chunk has happened where we've become very successful, but it's success grounded with a huge foundation. That's the best way of having it. You can't deny it. You're that much more able to handle it and to be objective about it. It's a very real situation. It makes it very un-candy-flossy. Of course, it's incredible that the album's doing as well as it's doing – it's great – but it's not half so mindblowing as getting a hit album that's sold two million out of nowhere.

"Because you can find yourself in big trouble if you're not psychologically prepared for it. And it's happened to a lot of people."

Do you think that's what happened to, well, Peter, for example?

"Uhhh... No, he did that to himself. Maybe he'd turn around and say 'Mick, you're wrong. It wasn't that.' But as someone who feels he knows Peter, I think that's just all that happened. I think it's a drag. And I've told him so. Through the years. Two and a half months ago I spoke to him. He's still not playing. And he still doesn't sound any happier for it, you know. If he was happy through not doing something I'd think that was great. He's not."

Mick breaks off to strenuously deny all "Peter Green To Rejoin Fleetwood Mac" news stories. Particularly one that had appeared in this paper: "It's just a pity because we don't get much press in England anyway. The one thing that comes out

John McVie, Nicks, Fleetwood, Christine McVie and Buckingham at the Second Annual Rock Music Awards, September 18, 1976

just has a groping-in-the-past vibe to it. Very unpositive. And we feel that everything that's happening now is positive. And let's face it: Peter was a very important part of this band, of course he was, but it's a long time ago.

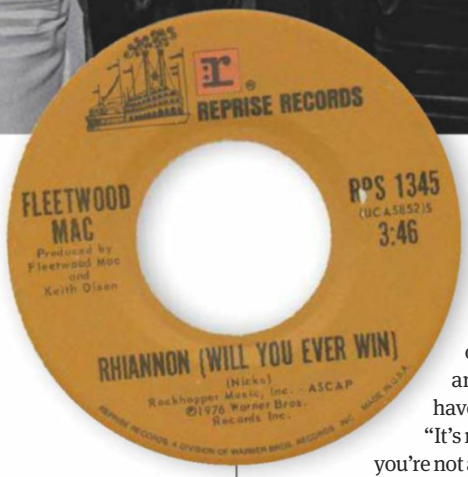
"And a lot of people were. I mean, Bob Welch was very much more a part of this band than Peter Green was in terms of being involved in it for a period of time. Peter will always have a lot of respect from me and from John and from everyone else. He's a very fine musician and I think it's a drag he's not playing. And he's a person who I still love. He may not feel that strongly towards me..."

Guitarist Bob Welch, Mick Fleetwood suspects, was disappointed that *Heroes Are Hard To Find* only just made the US Top 40 albums. It did a steady 300,000 copies in the States – *Bare Trees*, *Penguin*, *Mystery To Me* and now "Heroes Are Hard To Find" have all gone gold for Fleetwood Mac on American sales – and the usual 4,000 copies in Britain.

> "THE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED HAVE BEEN VERY... UNBLUNT HAPPENINGS"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

ANYWAY, FLEETWOOD was in Los Angeles, checking out studios in which to record *Fleetwood Mac*, when an engineer played him a tape that Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks had made more than three years previously as an almost totally unknown Polydor band, the Buckinghams. Exit Bob Welch. Enter Lindsey and Stevie.

"It felt right. It was very quick. In fact, they joined the band before we'd even played a note. It was just right. We all met. We all liked each other and that was it. We rehearsed for 10 days and went in and made the album. That was it. It was just a great sense of circumstance. I think it's wrong to start analysing it for whys and wherefores. That was it."



And Stevie could quit her job as a waitress.

For the first time since we've begun speaking, Mick Fleetwood's mood slides off down from its edge of speedy contentment as he backtracks over the band's dispute with former manager Clifford Davis. With the case still embroiled in the slow mills of the English legal system, our conversation is thereby largely sub-judice. Since the litigation began, all Fleetwood Mac royalties on pre-*Heroes Are Hard To Find* albums have been frozen pending the result of the case.

Fleetwood Mac's management is now conducted by McVie and Fleetwood. Even more so than Peter Green's or Jeremy Spencer's splitting from the band, the dispute was the most thorough nadir of the band's fortunes.

Fleetwood stares at the light flashing constantly on the pink phone in front of him after outlining his own opinions about the case: "A lot of people at the time said, 'Are you giving up?' But no. Because that's what I do. You know, I play the drums," he laughs. "I don't do anything else. Maybe one day I will. But right now – no!"

And obviously taking on the management was an extra problem you could have done without.

"It's not easy, no. Certainly you're not able to devote as much time as maybe you should. But, whatever, the situation on the whole is very good. And we certainly haven't had a lack of success because of that.

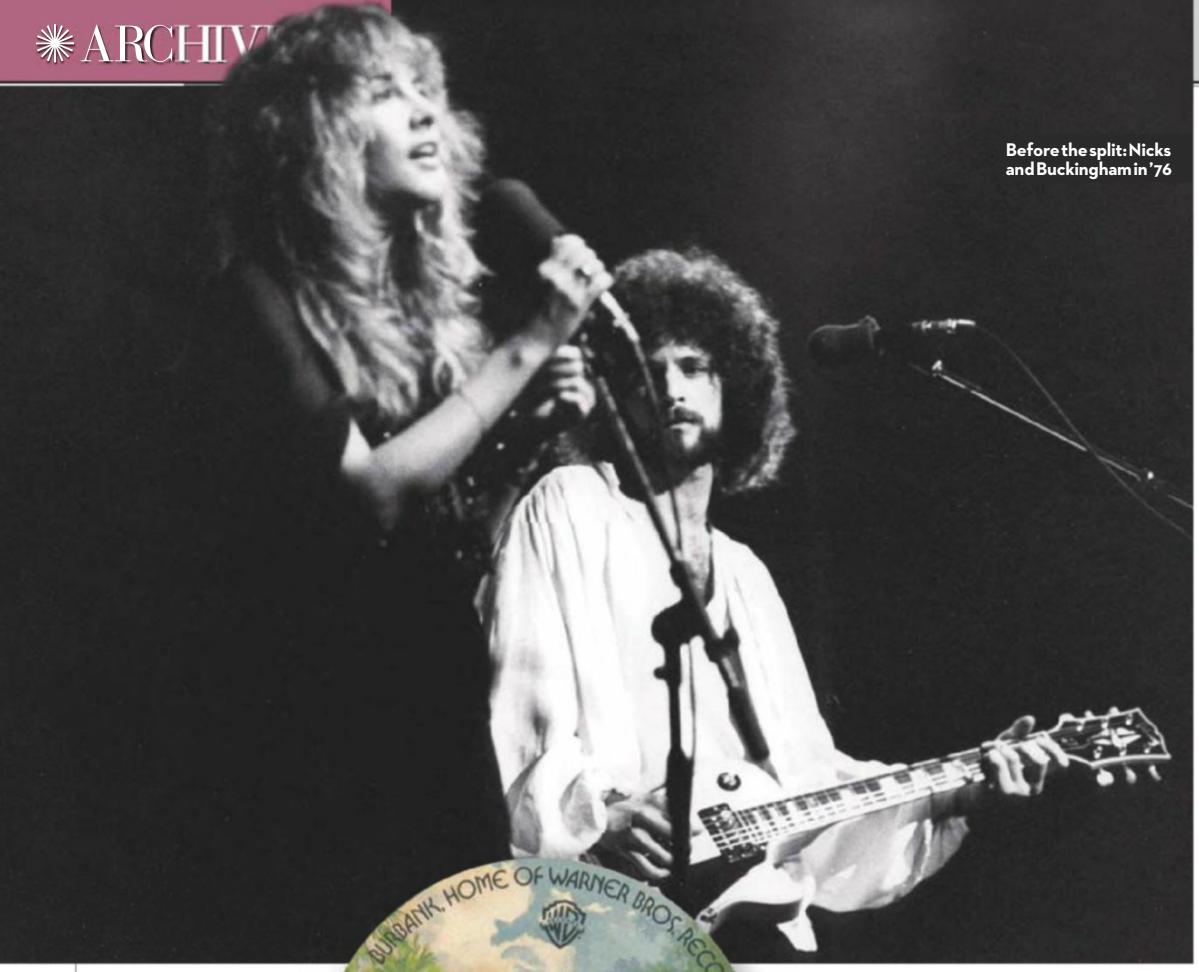
"You know what I mean? If everything had been a disaster, of course... But even so there are little things that you'd like to be able to do. To pay attention to... Umm, I think from that respect there definitely is a degree of compromise. With realising you can't be the ace manager as such. But on the other hand there are a lot of people that feel they are ace managers and they're ace idiots as well. And we don't want to be involved with them.

"Initially we looked around. But none of them felt right. They all, of course, were very eager to say that we would have no success at all without the wears and tears of Me. And, of course, they're all completely wrong."

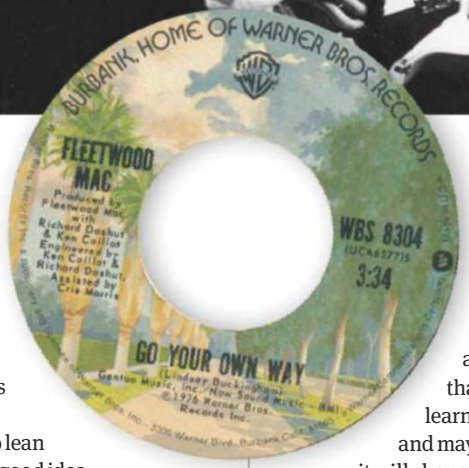
So you must have gained a lot of insight into a totally different side of the music business?

He nods: "It's not easy. There are a lot of people that have so much bullshit and basically they just get lucky. What I'm saying is: had someone been involved with the band during the last 18 months, that person would have taken a lot of credit for what has gone down. 'Look, I really organised you.'

CBS VIA GETTY IMAGES



Before the split: Nicks and Buckingham in '76



"Well, this to me epitomises the whole situation of a musician or an artist becoming inhibited and, you know, like the Queen Bee. You take them out of their nest and they're helpless without this thing: the manager. Or the thing to lean on. Which can well be a good idea for some people because some people are incapable and most bands, I'd say, would have collapsed and said, 'My God. We can't handle this.' It has been a strain. Yes, it has.

"But it's worthwhile. Just to know. Especially it's intriguing because... Professional people as such have voiced nothing but disaster from very famous managers saying, 'I'll maybe consider handling you if you change your name. This would be the best thing for you to do.'"

Who said that? "Well, that name will not come out. But a very prominent, respected manager."

I'm astounded. I mean, why did you finally decide to just call the album *Fleetwood Mac*?

"Because we felt like just saying 'This is Fleetwood Mac.'"

Make a statement, right?

"Yeah. Wake up, you know."

Of course, now it seems like a fusion of everything coming together at the right time: the title, your drawing power, the self-management...

"You bet. And that's just another intriguing thing. You just think, 'Oh, I see.' And, of course, all these people have lived to eat their words in the nicest possible sense because they've had to do it themselves without having it shoved down their throat."

So having seen it from that side, what do you now feel about the music business?

"I dunno. There's *some* positive parts to it. I think the main drag of it is that artistic people are very vulnerable to unpleasant people with motives that are not altogether true to a purpose all the time. And that would be a lesson well learnt. We learnt the hard way and maybe some day, some time, it will change. And we'll turn around and say 'Save us!' to someone. I doubt it very much, though."

AND THEN I check out an ugly rumour with John McVie: John, may I ask if it's true that you and Chris have split up?

"Yes, we have."

Apart from the obvious emotional aspect, how did that affect the band?

He shrugs and runs his finger along the Nixon "Peace With Honour" poster to his right: "Not in the slightest. For whatever reasons, these things happen so you adjust your attitude accordingly. You accept the fact that what was is no longer. But obviously the core of the friendship is still there."

No difficulties in playing together?

"Oh no. We still see each other every day. We just don't live with each other and don't sleep with each other."

Mick: "That's what I said earlier on about the whole year being weird for everyone..."

John: "Mick's been divorced..."

> "ARTISTIC PEOPLE ARE VERY VULNERABLE TO UNPLEASANT PEOPLE"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

Mick: "My family situation has not been happy. Stevie and Lindsey... they're separated. They weren't married, but they'd been involved with each other for six or seven years. So the whole band's gone through a complete emotional trauma on top of what's happened to the band.

"Again, it's very unusual. It's very electric. Somewhere in there it has something to do with what the band gives off. A lot of very, very strong emotional power comes off this band. Between the band and the audiences there's a very, very real and very, very huge energy exchange. Nothing to do with music. Because it's happened before with this band. When this band first started. There was that feeling. And I would say quite definitely that there was a certain period when that no longer was as strong.

"It's ironic really – it's totally different but there is a link. There's a definite full circle: now we've got three writers in the band. Well, there were three writers in the band and a very intriguing situation: there's Jeremy jigging around totally like... there were three bands in one, which isn't the case now, but there was that interest, you know... And there's Danny la-la-ing and being really melodic and there's Peter like just giving off such a heavy vibe – I mean, a really strong person. And the whole band had that focus of interest for a couple of years. That is definitely back. The band is very much more than just a band, now: like there's a little story to be told with everyone who's in the band, you know. It's intriguing.

"But I can see that just by twisting round with a mirror, seeing what goes on. So in that respect it's sort of gone full circle. That vibe anyway. But it stops there," he laughs. "We're certainly not sounding the same as eight years ago."

Then: "Of course, I was told it would all work out before we started over here."

John: "Yes, that's right."

Mick: "I'm very uninvolved in all of that stuff, but I knew."

He nods to himself and looks a little coyly self-conscious.

John: "He had his chart done."

Mick: "Yes, plus my date of birth – numerology. As I say I'm not involved really in that sort of side of things but it was very..." – for the final time this afternoon – "...interesting.

"She's right. But so am I. So's everyone. Yeah."

And then I find out that at the time I am actually doing this interview, Peter Green is staying round at a mutual friend's house just a couple of hundred yards from where I live in London.

As Mick would put it: *interesting*.

DAVID WAINWRIGHT

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RELEASE DATE 4 FEBRUARY 1977

RUMOURS

"Tell me why/Everything turned around..." An everyday tale of disintegrating relationships, baroque hedonism and 40 million album sales.

BY ANDY GILL

IT SPEAKS VOLUMES about the enduring quality of *Rumours* that its appeal has not been diminished by the twin taints of appropriation as political anthem and the BBC's Formula One theme music. It remains one of pop's most impervious generational touchstones, something that Bill Clinton's team understood perfectly when they chose "Don't Stop" as his campaign theme in 1992; and doubtless, in the mutually promotional manner of such things, the association with Slick Willy helped extend its commercial momentum to the flabbergasting current figure of 40 million sales.

Rumours represents the pinnacle of America's '70s rock-culture expansion, exemplifying a countercultural mindset lured into coke-fuelled hedonism. Its very sound, with those winsome melodies, those West Coast harmonies, and that rhythm section lagging fractionally, imperceptibly behind the beat – literally laidback – conjures a fantasy world of luxurious, liberal excess and Californication, captured with sleek perfection. Just as they were finishing it, the first tremors of punk Luddism were shaking London and New York, rendering *Rumours* the grand hurrah of a certain rock style. Even the band themselves opted for more new-wave stylings on the follow-up, *Tusk*.

The album's story is well-known, rock's premier case of strife bringing forth sweetness, as Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham batted the tattered remnants of their relationship back and forth in song. She had only to refer to *"thunder"* in "Dreams", for him to snipe back *"You can roll like thunder"* in "Go Your Own Way" – but both songs are equally sublime, as too are Christine McVie's attempts to cheer up the troops in songs like "Don't Stop" and "You Make Loving Fun". Heaven only knows how they managed to remain focused (and civil) enough to bring the project to such glorious fruition. According to engineer Ken Caillat, in his account of the sessions, Buckingham and Nicks would be sitting opposite each other at mics, recording their parts for "You Make Loving Fun", and as soon as the take ended, they'd be swearing at each other before the tape could be rewound; then stop mid-row to nail their parts perfectly on the next take.

They began work on the album following a six-month tour behind the chart-topping *Fleetwood Mac* album. After preliminary sessions in Miami's Criteria Studios, the band reconvened at the Record Plant in Sausalito, despite most of them wanting to record separately at their homes. Correctly surmising that a band required collective effort, Mick Fleetwood insisted they use the studio, and they hunkered down there with engineers Richard Dashut and Ken Caillat for two months. Collectivity was hard to achieve, however: the McVies had recently called time on their eight-year marriage and persevered with brusque English civility, but Buckingham and Nicks were ferociously disputatious. Both couples restricted their communications to strictly musical matters, and the music gradually became the medium through which their antipathies were aired. To cap it all, Mick Fleetwood discovered that his wife Jenny had had an affair with a friend of his. Not for nothing was the album's working title *Yesterday's Gone*.

Indulgent and expensive block-booking of the studio was matched by formidable cocaine use and, having no guiding outside producer to crack the whip, they dawdled through the sessions. A typical day would start at 7pm with dinner, followed by partying till the small hours, then finally, when they were too blasted to party, recording would begin. As Nicks later said, they made their best music when they were in their worst shape. Musically, Lindsey Buckingham was the motivating force of the sessions: he was the one with the best grasp on how to transform an idea into a finished arrangement, and his relentless drive ensured that even songs notionally critical

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The arrangements are well crafted without being contrived and although a lot of Los Angeles (the harmonies and the general ambience) is evident in what Fleetwood Mac do, it is not the smug, over-rich LA vibe contained in too many other LA-based artists' work."

STEVE CLARKE, *NME*, FEBRUARY 12, 1977

of him sounded as perfect as his own criticisms of others. The basic formula essentially blended his guitars, usually acoustic textures overlaid with electric parts, with Christine McVie's imaginative armoury of keyboards, ranging from funky clavinet on "You Make Loving Fun" to harpsichord on "Gold Dust Woman" and a combination of electric and acoustic pianos on "Don't Stop".

Characteristically, McVie's songs are the LP's most positive and optimistic, with the ebullient singalong "Don't Stop" and euphoric "You Make Loving Fun", a joyous acclamation of her new relationship with the band's lighting director (he was fired once the others found out) joined by "Oh Daddy", celebrating Fleetwood's reunion with Jenny. Nicks' compositions are hopeful but more delusory, with "Dreams" and "I Don't Want To Know" seeking a positive outcome from her split with Buckingham – though epic closer "Gold Dust Woman" does treat that romantic turmoil and her own coke addiction with honesty, notwithstanding its invocation to *"rock on, ancient queen"*. Buckingham's songs are less optimistic, with his finger-style showcase "Never Going Back Again" and the galloping "Go Your Own Way" both brooding plaints of sulky antipathy transformed by cheery arrangements into anthems of get-up-and-go self-determination.

It's the three-part vocals of Buckingham, Nicks and McVie, though, which are most crucial in cementing the band's sound, giving an impression of smooth, harmonious unity belied by their social upheavals. It took a non-writer, John McVie, to recognise the truth behind this shiny surface. Noting that the band members were writing "journals and diaries" about each other, he suggested they rename the album *Rumours*.

Following two months ensconced in Sausalito – with a brief sojourn to Berkeley's Zellerbach Auditorium to record Christine McVie's signature tune "Songbird", which Ken Caillat felt required a larger, concert-hall ambience than the one afforded by the Record Plant's claustrophobic room – the band went out on a 10-stop tour before reconvening at Wally Heider's Studio in San Francisco, Davlen Recording in Hollywood, and the Record Plant's LA studio for overdubs. It was during these sessions that they discovered the tape damage which diminished the rhythm tracks, necessitating expensive specialist treatment to restore the original rhythm tracks from the safety masters. This, though, was just a final traumatic flutter in the process, and they were able to deliver the "all killer, no filler" album they had set out to create. It was a huge instant hit. It secured the band their first UK No 1 and spent an extraordinary 31 weeks atop the US chart. The first year's sales approached a cool 10 million, and it just kept on selling through the years – a landmark of modern music offering a powerful evocation of its own era, yet whose appeal sustains untarnished through successive decades.

TRACKMARKS RUMOURS

1. Second Hand News ★★★★
2. Dreams ★★★★★
3. Never Going Back Again ★★★★★
4. Don't Stop ★★★★★
5. Go Your Own Way ★★★★★
6. Songbird ★★★★
7. The Chain ★★★★★
8. You Make Loving Fun ★★★★★
9. I Don't Want To Know ★★★★
10. Oh Daddy ★★★★
11. Gold Dust Woman ★★★★

Label: Warner Brothers
Produced: Fleetwood Mac, Ken Caillat, Richard Dashut
Recorded: Criteria Studios, Miami; Record Plant Studios, Sausalito; Record Plant Studios, LA; Wally Heider Studios, San Francisco; Zellerbach Auditorium, Berkeley; Davlen Studio, Hollywood
Personnel: Stevie Nicks (vocals), Christine McVie (vocals, keyboards), Lindsey Buckingham (vocals, guitars), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 1

(l-r) Nicks, Fleetwood, Christine and John McVie, Buckingham, circa 1977

"Being in Fleetwood Mac is more like being in group therapy!"

Lindsey Buckingham and Mick Fleetwood contemplate the miracle of *Rumours* as it sits astride the US charts. "Things never got bitchy," they tell ROY CARR. "The atmosphere was confused — to say the least — but it wasn't destructive." Then a year later, as the album finally reaches No 1 in the UK charts, STEVE CLARKE finds Fleetwood embracing life as a manager — not just of his own band, but of Bob Welch and Peter Green, too!

TAKEN FROM NME 02/04/1977

SOME NEWSPAPERS employ scribes whose sole function is to regularly update the unpublished obituaries of prominent personalities, so as to be in-at-the-kill on their demise. Something of a dead-end job, as it were. However, it would take scores of full-time researchers to keep abreast of the fluctuating fortunes of Fleetwood Mac – the band that continues to exist despite itself.

In the 10 years since they debuted at the National Blues & Jazz Festival in Windsor, Fleetwood Mac have transmogrified from a star-crossed, guitar hero dominated, cult blues band into Warner Brothers Records' biggest-ever-album-selling attraction.

But it has been a career fraught with impending disaster. Guitarists have quit under harrowing banner headlines, bogus lineups have laid claim to the name, and those original members who've stuck it out have enacted more melodramas than a whole slew of soap-opera scriptwriters could have conceived in a lifetime. In truth, all aspects of human emotion are to be found in Fleetwood Mac.

But the Mac stubbornly refused to roll over and expire. Call it masochistic, but the band appears to thrive on one Big Hurt after another.

Until the middle of last year, Fleetwood Mac had resigned themselves to the fact that they worked to live, lived to work, and weren't in a position to rest up for a year or more to rethink or record. Their albums always got reviewed, made a brief if not auspicious appearance in the bestsellers, and received more airtime than that usually afforded albums enjoying much more commercial success on the charts. It may not have been *la dolce vita*, but it was a fairly comfortable existence.

LET'S START in 1975: after a four-year residency, American guitarist Bob Welch became yet another Mac statistic, being unceremoniously replaced by the highly attractive boy-girl team of Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks. After just 10 days of routining new material, the refurbished lineup of Mick Fleetwood, Christine and John McVie and Buckingham and Nicks were in the studio recording a bunch of originals subsequently released under the unadventurous title, *Fleetwood Mac*.

At first, nothing much happened and a six-month road tour ensued before their fortunes were to take a turn for the better, professionally at least. It was during this period that deep cracks began to appear in their personal stability, and almost on cue Fleetwood Mac went into yet another all-too-familiar nosedive.

Christine and John McVie separated mid-tour, adding the cost of an extra hotel room to the band's travel budget; and, after six years of being inseparable, Buckingham and Nicks ceased cohabitating; and Mick Fleetwood, desperately trying to play piggy-in-the-middle, realised that his own marriage had hit the skids. Bands have broken up for much less. But not Fleetwood Mac.

Contrary to belief, pressure of success wasn't the cause. *Fleetwood Mac* had yet to take off like an epidemic, sell in excess of four million albums Stateside and hatch three hit singles, "Rhiannon", "Over My Head" and "Say You Love Me". Everyone just fell out of love with one another at precisely the same moment.

So... three broken homes for sale. John and his collection of penguin statuettes moved out of the McVies' Malibu apartment on to a 41-foot schooner, while Christine set up a home overlooking the hustle and bustle of Sunset Strip. Lindsey and Stevie established single lifestyles, and Mick and Jenny Fleetwood divorced – though they were later to remarry.

To add to their immediate problems, Mac were attempting to record tracks for what would eventually evolve into *Rumours*.

"Being in Fleetwood Mac is more like being in group therapy!" Who said that?

It was drummer and Mac manager elect Mick Fleetwood. He is trying to fight off a headcold as we sit jawing in the pleasant rustic atmosphere of Seedy Management, situated by the gates of the Columbia movie lot in the very heart of Hollywood Babylon. It's a typical Californian spring morning. Warm, sunny, light to variable. Definitely not the kind of day to be feeling one degree under.

However, with typical British reserve, Mick Fleetwood has mastered the art of coping with any and every situation, And his resilience must be contagious because Lindsey Buckingham, en route to having his wisdom teeth yanked, shows no apparent signs of fear.

Over the last year Fleetwood Mac have supplied America's dirt-diggin' gossip columnists with more copy than the Burton's divorce-reconciliation-divorce marriage-go-round, to the extent that Mac's marital shenanigans have been likened to everything from *Peyton Place* to *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*.

> "WE HAVE THREE WRITERS – IT MAKES THE COMPETITION THAT MUCH KEENER"
> LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

AS IT TRANSPIRES, it took a whole year to record *Rumours*, and the project was nearly completed long before *Fleetwood Mac* began to be pressed-up in platinum – the latter album having pursued an eccentric pathway towards success. According to Mr Fleetwood, it originally reached as high as No 9 and dropped to 40 before it regained its upward curve.

Fleetwood Mac – the Californian soundtrack of '76. Even Mick Fleetwood has long since given up trying to evaluate its phenomenal success in the Americas and its apathetic reception in the Old Country. It's happened and he's thankful, but he's not about to go into deep analysis on the subject. Obviously, the introduction of two singer-songwriters had a great deal to do with it but, as Mick points out, Fleetwood Mac has never conformed to one specific, recognisable style.

"Nobody," he suggests in between sniffles, "who has ever joined this band has been forced

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

to structure their music to conform. You've only got to flick through our mess of albums to see that." He emphasises the word 'mess'.

"I can remember when Danny Kirwan joined, Peter [Green] turned round to him and casually said, 'Right, lad, you've got half the album,' and *Then Play On* contains a lot of new things that nobody had ever heard on a Fleetwood Mac album before."

"Lots of bands wouldn't take that kind of risk," says Fleetwood. "We do. And I think it's healthy."

As to the band's resurgence of popularity, both Fleetwood and Buckingham agree with my theory that primarily the present lineup is a singles band utilising an album formula.

"There's a lot of flexibility and versatility within the current set-up," Buckingham interjects before leaving for his dental appointment. "Even with three separate lead vocalists there's still this cohesive continuity, so it doesn't really matter if Christine, Stevie or myself are taking the lead.

"As a contributor, I feel that much of Fleetwood Mac's strength is in the fact that only the very best material makes it on to an album. And, as there are three main writers, it makes competition that much keener."

> "MONEY IS GREAT, BUT IT'S NOT IMPORTANT. IT'S NOT WHAT REALLY MATTERS"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

Mick Fleetwood agrees, "This way there's no strain on any particular writer. Nobody is constantly under extreme pressure to write all the material for the next album. So that's no problem."

Yet problems – the kind that floor you – have become an integral part of Mac's very existence.

Why have they always refused to throw in the towel? "Over the years," says Fleetwood, "we've been so wrapped up in our destiny that, though offers have been forthcoming, the idea of being somewhere else, playing in another band, has never really appealed to either John, Christine or myself. It's as simple as that."

According to the drummer, nobody – with the exception of Danny Kirwan – has ever quit Fleetwood Mac due to the overall encompassing excuse of "difference of musical policy". From his lofty vantage point of manager-performer and pillar-of-strength, Fleetwood opines that being in the band may well bring out the weak points in a person's character but, by the same token, it strengthens others. He cites the recording of *Rumours* as testament.

"When the shit hit the fan everybody probably thought that this was the end of Fleetwood Mac, and that it would be impossible to work under such intense conditions. Theoretically, it was a helluva bad time to try to record a new album, but in retrospect it proved to be the reverse. Because it all came out in the music."

As a result, *Rumours* is an album of strong personal emotions, persistent, soul-searching – and currently America's best-selling. Still, it can't have been easy spending nine weeks incarcerated in the Record Plant's Sausalito studio with everyone falling apart at the seams and a recording desk that all but destroyed the original backing tracks?

"Things never got bitchy," says Fleetwood, "Sure, the atmosphere was confused – to say the least – but it wasn't destructive. It may be difficult for someone outside of the group to understand what I'm saying, but we're a bunch of people before we're a bunch of musicians. What happened was that all five of us were going through exactly the same problem at the very same time. Only in Fleetwood Mac could that ever happen.

"So there we all were, trying to put down the basic backing tracks and all feeling so desperately unhappy with life. But somehow we created a mutual bond. We could all relate to each other's desperation. Despite ourselves, we didn't lose contact. It wasn't as though there wasn't anyone else we could turn to. Strange as it might sound, we had one another – so we went through shit to get to the point where we could still live and communicate as friends.

"I don't think anyone ever turned round and said, 'I don't need this, I'm splitting.' We all understood how we all felt because we were all involved in each other's lives.

"Sure we laugh at it now, we even make jokes. [*A recent cover of* Rolling Stone *sports an Annie Leibovitz shot of all five in one bed: Christine cuddling Lindsey, Mick with his arm around Stevie and John off in a corner reading.*] But, believe me, it wasn't funny at the time."

"The thing that happened between Lindsey and Stevie and Christine and John wasn't that they suddenly took a dislike to one another, it was just that they realised they could no longer live together, and so there was no malice when they separated. For instance, the other evening John and I went round to Christine's place to have a drink with her and her boyfriend. So, if anything, the weird circumstances in which we decided to record *Rumours* helped to make that much stronger than before.

"From the start to finish it took one year to complete *Rumours*. We'd recorded the backing tracks in nine anxious weeks, but the emotions that we'd originally put down on the tape in Sausalito were so strong that we didn't want to be immature and insensitive towards those feelings. That's why we took such care in the dubbing and the mixing.

"We just went though our collective traumas head-on and it was then that we all revealed our own true colours. In the past, both John and I have had to handle some really weird situations... Peter Green... Jeremy Spencer... But as far as Lindsey and Stevie were concerned, they didn't go like lambs to the slaughter, they just underwent a crash-course in maturity."

I wonder what these guys do for an encore?

AS FLEETWOOD MAC'S *Rumours* finally struggles to the top slot on the British album charts, a year after release, the group's drummer Mick Fleetwood continues to further his career as a successful manager. First one ex-Mac guitarist, Bob Welch, came under his guiding hand and now he is hoping to play a part in relaunching a "recovered" Peter Green.

Fleetwood, assisted initially by John McVie and Bob Welch, first took over the management of Fleetwood Mac in 1974, after original manager Clifford Davis had put a 'bogus' Fleetwood Mac on the road. At that time the former doyen of British blues bands was close to bankruptcy, and still without any real hold on the American market. That they had potential was clear when a stream of managers rushed to offer their services.

Against the odds – and against record company wishes – Fleetwood decided it would be best if he took care of the Mac. Today, they're one of the world's biggest bands. *Rumours* has sold 10 million worldwide, and is still selling.

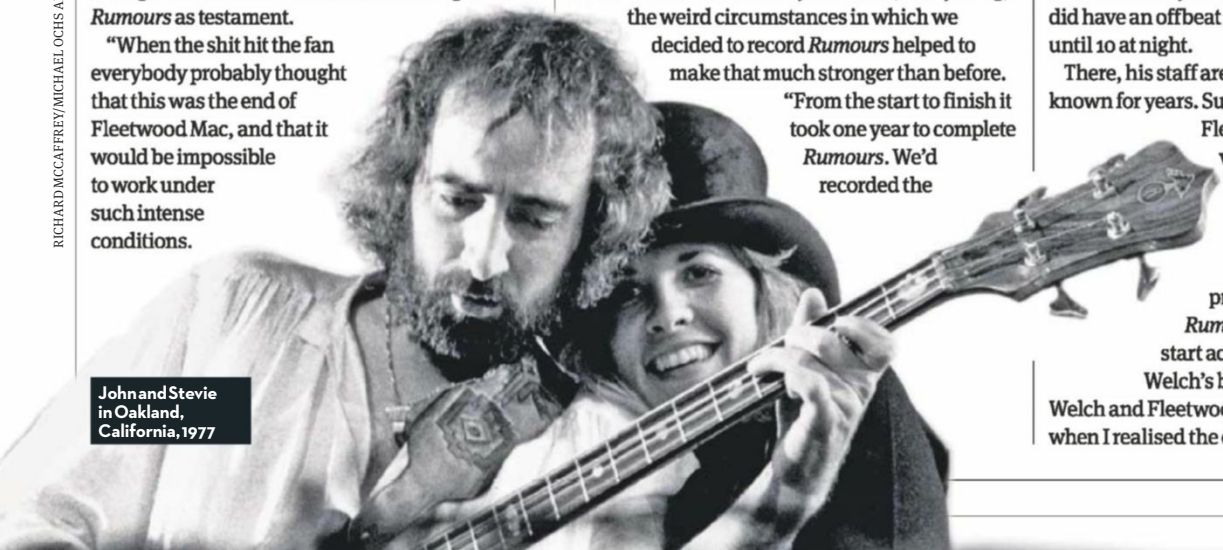
Moreover, Bob Welch, who quit Fleetwood Mac at the end of '74, has finally broken through as a solo act. Fleetwood took him on to his books last year. Since then Welch has had a big American hit with "Sentimental Lady", a track which Fleetwood himself suggested as a single.

"I'm a manager, but I don't feel like one," Fleetwood told *NME* over the phone from Los Angeles last week, his well-spoken English accent still intact. "I'm always Mick who plays the drums first," he said, "not Mick who manages the band."

That may be so, but when Mac isn't touring or recording, he'll spend his days working at the offices of Seedy Management (Fleetwood always did have an offbeat sense of humour), sometimes until 10 at night.

There, his staff are all people his band have known for years. Such is the tightness of Fleetwood's operation that when Welch hits the road in February, he'll take with him Fleetwood Mac's road crew; at that time Fleetwood Mac will be preparing their follow-up to *Rumours*, which they intend to start actual sessions for in April.

Welch's band was handpicked by Welch and Fleetwood. Mick: "I decided to expand when I realised the office had become capable of



John and Stevie in Oakland, California, 1977

RICHARD MCCAFFREY/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Beat surrender: Mick leaves his kit behind

doing the legwork while I was out on the road. It runs very smoothly. I felt Bob had made a big mistake when he formed Paris after leaving us. It was a project he had no control over, and totally out of character for him. He'd been through a whole string of managers in his time who weren't at all creative. I was confident I could offer him the proper facility."

Fleetwood maintains he isn't a business-first person, and emphasises he'll only involve himself in handling somebody's career if it's "heartfelt". "It's important to take care of the essence, and not concentrate too much on the money. That comes naturally."

The money he's invested in Welch isn't "a fortune", and he's confident that he'll more than recoup his investment. "Money is great, but it's not important. John [McVie] and myself have been with it and without it, and it hasn't affected us psychologically. It's not what really matters. If it had been, we would have given up long ago. It is important to maintain the right kind of motivation – and the more successful you become, the more difficult it gets."

Fleetwood also plans to manage a member of Welch's band. As for Fleetwood's role in managing Fleetwood Mac, while he decides when and where the band will do something (for instance, on a recent tour of Japan he decided the gigs would be filmed), he doesn't take a lead in musical matters.

He's particularly excited about a projected Russian tour the Mac are hoping to play in July. "It's a somewhat strange and delicate event," he told me. "It's a major event. It's not just going to be another rock'n'roll show. It has positive potential for bringing young people together." Three shows are planned, all for a United Nations charity.

Fleetwood is also keen to play a part in Peter Green's future. "We didn't sit down seriously and talk about management as such. I offered him my services first as a friend, and because I'm really excited about the way he is now. He knows it's no big deal if I do manage him – a far less terrifying prospect than if he was in some office with someone saying, 'I'm going to manage you, kid.'"

There is no way Green could fit into the current Mac lineup, though Fleetwood does hope to play with Green outside of Fleetwood Mac.

Mac are approaching their follow-up to *Rumours* with characteristic thoroughness. Owing to the glut of material, the ensuing album will be a double but, claims Fleetwood, with "no padding". At one point there were, um, rumours that the next album would be half studio and half live, but although they do have a lot of live material in the can, Fleetwood feels it would be treading water to put out a live record at this stage in their career. After all, he reasons, it will only be the current lineup's third LP.

Was there any pressure on them to record another *Rumours*?

"It's a mistake to worry too much about former glories," he said pointedly. "We've always done the stuff we wanted to do, and not because of any outside pressure. Our first priority is to satisfy ourselves and not the public – otherwise we would create a prison."

So why did he think that *Rumours* had been so successful?

"We all felt very strong together. There's a strong chemistry that I dread to digest in case I ruin something. Not only are Fleetwood Mac visually appealing, but unlike The Eagles or Chicago, when people think of us, they think of people and not just a band.

"When people describe us as MOR – and use it in a derogatory way – they're missing the point. The Beatles were MOR. There's more of that kind of reaction in England. It's similar to when 'Albatross' was a hit. Some of our fans resented us because we'd become public property. That's bullshit."

How about the emotional upsets that wreaked havoc when *Rumours* was recorded?

"Everything's subsided and it's strengthened us as band. There's a better rapport now that we're close friends and nothing else. We've forgotten about it. It's better just to get on with it and not harp on it. John's getting married. He and his future wife get on like a house on fire with Christine and her boyfriend."

Weird, huh?

"Not really," says Mick Fleetwood. "Things that may appear odd on the outside really aren't."

PETER GREEN IS playing again! The original Fleetwood Mac guitarist whose tragic departure from the rock'n'roll world has been one of the most mourned rock casualties of the decade, is now, according to Mick, "like the first day I met him."

Almost a year ago to the day, Green was committed for treatment in a mental hospital after an incident involving a shotgun. But last week Fleetwood informed *NME* that the guitarist was "a changed man".

"It's incredible. It's marvellous," enthused Fleetwood over the phone from his Bel Air home – where, incidentally, Green was married on January 4 to one Jane Samuel. Green has known his new wife – a Los Angelean who, Mick Fleetwood believes, he met in Hawaii – for four years, and visited Los Angeles primarily to marry her.

Green had turned up there unexpectedly, telephoning the sleeping Fleetwood just two hours before he arrived. The couple are currently honeymooning in London, but plan to return to America soon. It's rumoured that he will work in the studio there, with Fleetwood producing.

Mick Fleetwood saw the guitarist at a reception held for the re-established Fleetwood Mac at a London hotel late in '76. Journalists at the party were astonished to see the shape Green was in. Overweight and distant, he was barely recognisable as the brilliant guitarist/composer who'd played such a large part in revitalising the charts in the late '60s with a quartet of peerless singles.

"Looking at his eyes, he's a very different person to then," said Fleetwood. "He's a total pleasure to be with. He's now capable of being objective about all the stuff he's been through. He's come out of a lengthy process of getting his feet back on the ground. I don't want to come on like an amateur shrink, but I think Peter's recovery is down to the fact that he's started playing again. It's very destructive when you don't play for a long time.

"He was very positive about everything he wanted to do. Peter's not planning to come back like a bolt of lightning. He's playing like someone who hasn't played for six years, but who hasn't lost his centre. Sure, he's a bit rusty, but he still plays like no-one else. He needs to get down and do some hard work."

As yet, no record company is making any announcements about signing Green, although it seems preliminary negotiations are underway between Green and WEA Records.

At present, the guitarist isn't planning a return to the stage. "He's in no hurry," Fleetwood said. "He's waited seven years."

RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

RELEASE DATE 12 OCTOBER 1979

TUSK

How do you follow the world's biggest album? With champagne, cocaine, lobster, a 112-piece marching band and a radical desire to "shake people's perceptions about pop..." Success!

BY LAURA SNAPES

IN A JANUARY 1980 interview with *BAM* magazine, Lindsey Buckingham was asked how Fleetwood Mac had avoided becoming "another corporate monolith". "Part of it might have to do with the whole aura surrounding *Rumours*, which was somewhat of an exposé on all our personal lives," he mused. "That might have added a human touch to the band." What he failed to notice was that *Rumours* had also established the Mac as a band too impassioned and antagonistic to present a unified front. When he and Stevie Nicks joined in 1974 they catalysed a culture of individualism which Buckingham escalated when it came to writing what would become *Tusk*.

Following two months of rehearsals in summer 1978, Fleetwood Mac decided that they had so many good ideas (and so little ability to compromise), their 12th album would be a double. Warner Bros feared the $2 price hike would deter customers and fought unsuccessfully to release the first disc on completion. That would become the least of their worries.

Rumours may have been the world's biggest album, but it arrived on the cusp of punk, whose protagonists trashed MOR excesses. "We of course knew that this was just a big wank," Mick Fleetwood sighed in his autobiography. Buckingham, however, saw The Clash and Gang Of Four's innovations as a challenge to "shake people's perceptions about pop," as he told *Record* – though it was as much about bending the band to his will. Unsatisfied with contributing nine of the 20 songs, he made himself executive producer.

Fleetwood has retrospectively described Buckingham's *Tusk* overhaul as "extremely healthy" for the band's creativity. But at the time it was a product of intense mental and physical degradation. On top of their narcotic appetites, Buckingham had been diagnosed with epilepsy and Fleetwood with diabetes, and both their fathers died in '78. Frustrated by studios, Buckingham acquired a 24-track and started recording at home. One setup allowed him to play drums while on the toilet, though he famously preferred the percussive properties of tissue boxes.

Things didn't improve once Fleetwood Mac arrived at Los Angeles' Village Recorder in September 1979, having spent $1.4m customising the brand new Studio D. (It was designed to allow eye contact between every room, a move that seems born of suspicion, not openness.) On the first day of recording, engineer and co-producer Ken Caillat realised that Buckingham had lost it. Lindsey demanded that every console knob be turned 180 degrees to see what happened, and cut off all his hair with nail scissors. "He'd tape microphones to the studio floor and get into a sort of push-up position to sing."

Recording took 13 months, which Nicks likened to being held hostage in Iran. (She claims she was there six days a week, though everyone else says it was more like one.) She and Buckingham had recently split, and Nicks was secretly seeing Fleetwood. John and Christine McVie had divorced during the *Rumours* tour – she was seeing Dennis Wilson. To make matters worse, Buckingham claims his anti-commercial decisions made him the victim of "open hostility" from his bandmates. They gorged themselves: cocaine, champagne and lobster, English beer on tap. Unsurprisingly, this proved counterproductive: what was 'marvellous' one evening sounded limp the next day.

The excesses exceeded their appetites. The head of Yamaha came by to tune Christine McVie's acoustic piano. To Nicks' horror, it was decided that the LP would be named after "the male member". The title track featured the 112-piece University of Southern California Trojan Marching Band live in LA's Dodger Stadium. This was Fleetwood's "special contribution", as he put it in his memoir. The previous summer, on holiday in Normandy, he was awakened by the village brass band – "the catalyst for the village,

CRITICS' VERDICT

"This is exactly the sort of record you'd expect from a bunch of seasoned musicians whose last album outsold anything else before it in the history of the world, and who have become so satiated with the marshmallow reality of Southern California that their creativity has all but atrophied."

MARK WILLIAMS, *MELODY MAKER*, OCTOBER 20, 1979

"Fleetwood Mac make good adventurous 'pop'. As Charles Shaar Murray said of Joe Jackson, if you reckon you're too hip for *Tusk*, then you're simply too hip."

NICK KENT, *NME*, OCTOBER 20, 1979

bringing old and young together, playing and laughing." It was a camaraderie he wanted to instil in the record. But by the time they got to Dodger Stadium, John McVie had finished recording and was off sailing in Hawaii.

Tusk turned out to be a strangely fragile LP. Buckingham's jittery production couldn't tamp down the *Rumours*-worthy choruses of McVie's "Think About Me", or the looser of his own contributions, "What Makes You Think You're The One" and "That's All For Everyone". The latter sat in the middle of Side 2 but played like a lighter-swaying closer, fading out in a haze of marimba and sweet acoustic guitar. The rest of Buckingham's songs rattle nervously, attesting to his recreational habits: "That's Enough For Me" has an almost cowpunk stomp. Until the final minute of "The Ledge", John McVie's bass leads proceedings in an antic stand-up style while Christine McVie and Nicks attempt to follow teeth-chattering lyrics – the harmonising of *Rumours* was gone.

Although Buckingham tried to foist his style on Nicks and McVie's songs, they stand starkly apart – only Nicks' "Angel", with its spindly backbone, fits the scheme. Where McVie brought the most upbeat material to *Rumours*, here her songs are muted and mournful: the watery keys and pedal steel of opener "Over And Over"; "Brown Eyes"' with its accusatory hiss (and imperceptible Peter Green cameo). Closer "Never Forget" is her only optimistic moment, and it feels false. *Tusk* contains some of Nicks' defining songs: the pearlescent "Sara", a meditation on an abortion, and "Storms", expressing the absence of self that follows a loss.

Despite conflicting artistic impulses, most of *Tusk*'s songs confront the same heartache: the difficulty of finding and trusting true love. *"If I'm the one you love, think about me,"* Christine McVie pleads. *"I'll come running if you love me today,"* Buckingham promises on "Save Me A Place". The singers come together on "Tusk", making exasperated demands like a straight-talking chorus line: *"Why don't you ask him if he's going away? Why don't you tell me what's going on?"*

Tusk's creative landgrabs and addled mindsets meant nothing was clear. It's no wonder that their lyrics covered familiar ground – they were each utterly alone in this strange sphere, which Buckingham captured in *Tusk*'s disquieting haze. Things got more toxic on tour. One night, Buckingham kicked Nicks onstage. To avoid cavity searches in European airports, they hired a private train, only to discover that it once belonged to Hitler. The "human touch" was starting to feel more like a curse.

TRACKMARKS TUSK

1. Over And Over ★★★
2. The Ledge ★★★★★
3. Think About Me ★★★
4. Save Me A Place ★★★
5. Sara ★★★★★
6. What Makes You Think You're The One ★★★★
7. Storms ★★★★
8. That's All For Everyone ★★★★
9. Not That Funny ★★★★
10. Sisters Of The Moon ★★★★
11. Angel ★★★
12. That's Enough For Me ★★★
13. Brown Eyes ★★★★★
14. Never Make Me Cry ★★★
15. I Know I'm Not Wrong ★★★★
16. Honey Hi ★★★
17. Beautiful Child ★★★★
18. Walk A Thin Line ★★★
19. Tusk ★★★★★
20. Never Forget ★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced: Fleetwood Mac, Richard Dashut and Ken Caillat
Recorded: Village Recorder, Studio D, Los Angeles; Lindsey Buckingham's home studio
Personnel: Lindsey Buckingham (guitar, bass, drums, percussion, vocals), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion), Christine McVie (keyboards, vocals), John McVie (bass), Stevie Nicks (vocals); USC Trojan Marching Band (percussion, horns), Peter Green (guitar)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 4

"There's always been a very mystical thing about Fleetwood Mac."

The Mac in 1980: escaping from LA

The Cow Palace, San Francisco. **CHRIS SALEWICZ** ventures into the inner sanctum of Fleetwood Mac, dodges the canoodling Christine McVie and Dennis Wilson, gets high with Lindsey Buckingham, and discusses *Tusk*, money, America and, with the brandy-swigging prophet Stevie Nicks, an imminent "intense religious war". Plus! Buckingham reveals New Wave enthusiasms and Fleetwood Mac frustrations to **IAN BIRCH**

TAKEN FROM NME 19/1/1980

OF COURSE, FLEETWOOD MAC *is* The American Dream. The band's success story is the stuff of which the mythology of modern-day America is made: Mick Fleetwood, John and Christine McVie, down on their luck in the Olde Country, make the decision to move to The Promised Land. Travelling as far west as possible, these humble immigrants settle out on the most advanced technological frontier in the world, Los Angeles.

Operating within rock'n'roll's picaresque tradition, a surprise encounter teams the three English people up with two down-and-out American natives, Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham. Within a year, following closely the code of the WASP work ethic, their fortunes are changing for the better.

Within three years of moving to America they have become part of the aristocracy to which you are granted entry in the United States of America by virtue of your material rather than by virtue of your blood. When in Washington, Fleetwood Mac are invited to the White House for chit-chat with President Jimmy Carter. By now they are so rich that Mick Fleetwood tells a friend he knows he need never work again in his life. Gosh, it's like a good made-for-TV movie!

Rumours was a musical soap opera detailing diary entries of the emotional chaos within Fleetwood Mac following the breakthrough of the *Fleetwood Mac* album. The romantic traumas it dealt with, though, were those of wealthy, beautifully tanned people. A very glamorous record really, a sort of musical *Dallas*. Incorporating as many emotional buzzwords and buzz areas as possible, *Rumours* rather simply discussed the romantic problems of many people in their late twenties or early thirties. By doing so, it established once and for all the viability of what has now become known as AOR – adult-oriented rock.

In what seemed so apt in me-generation, self-fixated ("Buddy, from now on I'm looking after number one!") mid-'70s California – the state with the highest divorce rate in the world – Fleetwood Mac's position became something like the group-as-group-therapy. Easier than est [*Erhard Seminars Training*], safer than Synanon [*a drug rehab programme*], *Rumours* seemed as Californian as any of the new quasi-religious texts like *Zen And The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance* or the collected works of L Ron Hubbard.

That was not the sole factor, of course, behind *Rumours* selling close on 20 million copies. All that was just the in-depth back-up team, really. The real reason *Rumours* sold so many copies and became bigger-than-life-itself was, in the words of Warner Brothers' Derek Taylor: "It's just a very, very good double-sided pop record."

Fleetwood Mac's music is rock'n'roll – the rhythm section alone would ensure that – but it's a very poppy rock'n'roll, closer to Abba than Elmore James (the inspiration of the band's original guitarist). But can you imagine what the vibes must've been like in the studio during the making of *Rumours*? Fleetwood Mac probably shouldn't be begrudged a single cent of their wealth.

Even now – perhaps more than ever – there is something indefinably sad about Fleetwood Mac, especially about the three English expatriates. Or so it appears when I travel to San Francisco to see them play two dates at the Cow Palace at the end of their American tour.

Mick Fleetwood, for example, as well as apparently being still deeply in love with Jenny (sister of Patti) Boyd, his ex-wife of two divorces, suffers from both diabetes and a related condition that is the exact opposite of diabetes, meaning that he mustn't eat sugar and must eat a lot of sugar. One wonders at the possible cause of

SAM EMERSON

such an imbalance within his body. Meanwhile, the remarried John McVie (the band's penguin logo stems from the bassist's fascination for the bird – he even has one tattooed on his forearm), for many the definition of A Good Bloke, continues to seem happiest when he has a glass in his hand, though most people have a favourite drug, of course. Christine McVie, who has taken up with recently fired Beach Boy Dennis Wilson, seems to epitomise the paradoxes scattered throughout all aspects of the group: a Cancer, with all its mother (Earth) implications (her pure, rich vocals can only be described as "fecund"), she's had herself sterilised – a very Californian thing to do.

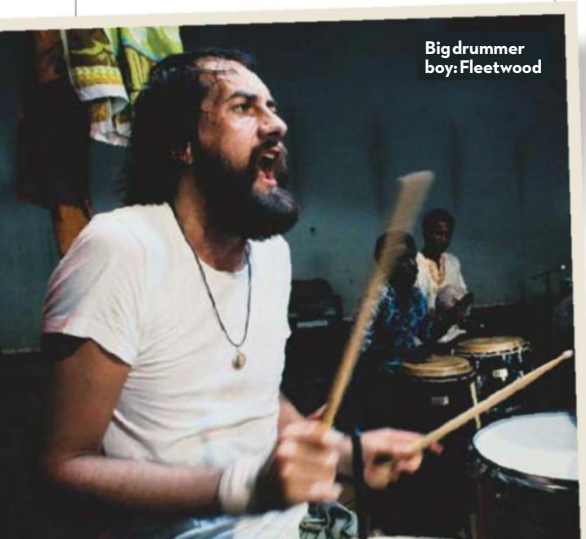
Really, though, the sadness of Fleetwood Mac has a very large responsibility for the band's popularity and for making so many people so happy.

THE REGALLY NAMED Lindsey Buckingham, the youngest group member at just 30, is the one Fleetwood Mac Person who is very much in sympathy with the newer ways of thinking. There's obviously a link between this and the fact he has nine songs on the new album, as opposed to the six by Christine McVie and the five from Stevie Nicks.

When we meet for a formal interview session he quizzes me about the English music scene and reveals a fair knowledge of such acts as Talking Heads and Gang Of Four. By contrast the tapes playing in the suite of Stevie Nicks – a very '60s sort of person, really – are Derek And The Dominos and Steve Miller. Her tastes are probably more representative of what the band listen to than Buckingham's. Fleetwood Mac are essentially conservative in their musical outlook – not just in their music, either: John McVie has a bit of a hard time relating to my pink socks.

So at a time when most younger bands are seeking to destroy the once assumed divinity of the massive studio bill, it's hardly surprising that the production costs of *Tusk* – the *Rumours* follow-up – should make it the first million dollar album. *Tusk* seems closer to a mega-budget Hollywood movie production than to good ol' funky rock'n'roll... which is appropriate, really, because with their homes in Bel Air, Beverly Hills and Malibu, Fleetwood Mac are part of the New Hollywood.

> "THERE IS DEFINITELY GOING TO BE AN EARTHQUAKE – LA WILL BE FLATTENED"
> MICK FLEETWOOD



Big drummer boy: Fleetwood

RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

Though no-one will admit it, part of the expense of *Tusk* must've been (unconsciously perhaps) justified internally within the band as a weapon to fight the uncertainty and insecurity that would've inevitably been present in trying to follow as huge a success as *Rumours*. Besides, ivory's expensive. Ask elephants.

According to Buckingham, anyway, the cost of the record has become a little overstated. Basically, *Tusk* cost so much because someone cocked up: partially as an investment, no doubt, the Mac were going to have their own studio built, until they were strongly advised against it by people at Warner Brothers who told them costs would be absolutely prohibitive. Of course, if they'd listened to their own advice – a rare slip for the self-managed outfit – they'd have something more to show for all that money spent.

"In the context of the whole," Buckingham's high metallic voice tells me, "The *Rumours* album took longer to make than *Tusk*. One of the reasons why *Tusk* cost so much is that we happened to be at a studio that was charging a fuck of a lot of money. During the making of *Tusk* we were in the studio for about 10 months and we got 20 songs out of it. The *Rumours* album took the same amount of time. It didn't cost so much because we were in a cheaper studio. There's no denying what it cost, but I think it's been taken just a little out of context."

In addition, the much-touted digital recording hardly affected the band at all, its real use being in preserving the quality of the master tape and the records that are pressed from it.

Anyway, as Nick Kent wrote in his review of the double album, *Tusk* is a pretty fine traditional pop/rock record. It's only when Fleetwood Mac play some of it onstage that you become aware of its deficiencies: the band did spend too long in the studio. Live, the *Tusk* songs have a freshness and vital spirit that has become muted during all that studio time. It's still a good record, though.

"You've got to play it a lot," says John McVie. "It keeps getting better." Yeah, but if you keep doing that do you eventually reach saturation point, as happens with *Rumours* – a basically inferior record, incidentally, to the *Fleetwood Mac* album that preceded it?

Warner Brothers, of course, were anxious that the delay between *Rumours* and its successor was too great. For a while they wanted to release the first record of the two-record set as soon as it was completed. That was nixed. So was a heavy advertising campaign that the company had a New York agency present to the band. Mick Fleetwood: "The record company let this agency try something and when we saw it, it was... just nothing... It was scrapped immediately.

"I said I didn't think they'd be able to do it, because for pretty obvious reasons we're pretty preoccupied with not overselling ourselves. I think it's very unfortunate that someone like Peter Frampton let his music be cheapened by doing things like putting adverts for Peter Frampton watches in his albums. That just shouldn't happen. A record's supposed to be there to listen to. I think that's sick. I can't understand how people let that happen. I think it's real crass."

All this balance-sheet stuff aside, it may interest fans of the original Fleetwood Mac to learn that none other than Peter Green himself plays on the album. "That's right," confirms Fleetwood. "He plays about eight notes at the end of one of Chris' songs – 'Brown Eyes', I think it is. He just wandered into the studio while the track was being done.

"But," he continues with sudden despondency, "I've given up with Peter. I've totally given up. *He's* just given up where anything to do with money is concerned. After a while it just wears me down." The drummer confirms what I'd heard, that on the recently released Peter Green solo album, the guitar hero actually handles very little of the work on his chosen instrument: "A lot of the guitar is done by a friend of his. He told me that he'd handed over the guitar duties to someone else – ridiculous."

It was Mick – a good-natured fellow who presumably wanted to help Green in the same manner that he's assisted former Mac guitarist Bob Welch – who set Green up with a contract with Warners worth nearly a million dollars. "The day he was supposed to sign it he freaked out. I looked a bit stupid. After all, who would believe that he didn't want to sign a contract because he thought it was with the devil?" (Well, quite a few people, actually...)

FLEETWOOD MAC MAY be part of the New Hollywood but they're not taken in by all the LA bullshit – three of them are British after all, and all three are old lags in this rock'n'roll circus: they've seen it all before. Buckingham, meanwhile, would far rather live in his native San Francisco than Los Angeles. Stevie would probably favour living on a flying carpet.

"America is my home," says Fleetwood, "but I don't plan to live in Los Angeles much longer – none of us do, in fact. There is definitely going to be an earthquake. LA will be flattened. I have no regrets at all about moving."

He claims that the flakiness of Hollywood hardly affects him: "We work a helluva lot, so we don't get much chance to think about it."

Fleetwood Mac tour a lot for a band of their status (and age). "Out of the next 13 months," Mick tells me, "we're spending nearly nine months on the road. That is the sort of commitment to what we do. It's not that we just want to throw out an album and say, 'Oh, it'll do all right!'"

As the new royalty, of course, it's necessary for the band to occasionally hold court to meet local media dignitaries. These press conferences are fairly appalling affairs with – at the one I attended in San Francisco prior to the band's final three shows of their American tour, anyway – the local press and TV and radio fielding their questions with strained reverential smiles, like forelock-tugging supplicants come to beg for boons.

Held in one of the bland conference rooms at the San Francisco hotel in Union Square in the centre of the city, the event was strictly showbiz presidential, with the band – except Buckingham, who'd gone to visit his mother – sitting at a dais at one end of the room while such weighty questions as "Who is 'Sara'?" and "Mick, do you ever sneak

Live at Wembley, June 1980

out at night and go to clubs?" were put to the tolerant Mac. The killer was when some mutant got up and asked Stevie what she was doing for dinner that night.

In the middle of an hour and 20 minutes of this nonsense, Mick Fleetwood's whole body appears to go into spasms. Christine McVie, sitting next to him, massages his shoulders with thoughtful concern. Mick's having one of his diabetes attacks. He'd been late arriving at the press conference because he'd felt so lousy he thought he might have to blow it out altogether.

At times like this, one wonders, 'Is it worth it?'

ONSTAGE, FLEETWOOD MAC are a great rock band. Whatever Mick Fleetwood may say about attempting to step away from the LA soft-rock sound, on *Tusk* the band haven't gone far enough – or at least they probably didn't go far enough and then just stuck around for too long in that overpriced studio blowing their *Rumours* bread on overdubs. Onstage though, they really burn, with the new short-haired Buckingham – the somewhat camp shots of him on the *Tusk* sleeve being only stage one of a metamorphosis into Beverly Hills New Waver that has now been completed – spurring the band on from his centrestage stance. By the third number the sweat's running down his face and neck like a waterfall.

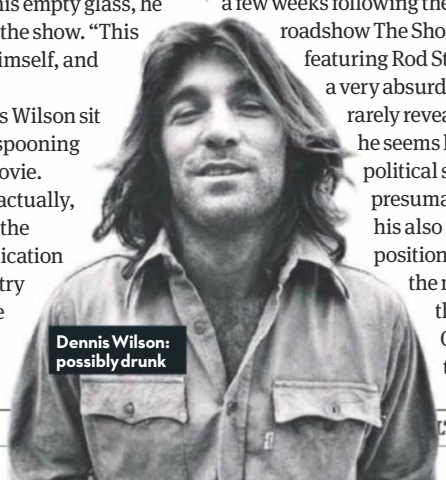
John McVie, who with Mick Fleetwood makes one of the hardest, most inventive rhythm sections in rock, adopts a most unusual stance for a bassist by moving about a lot and entering into duelling partnerships with Buckingham, himself a feisty rather than academic or soulful guitarist. At stage right, Christine McVie provides the Mother Earth image she is so keen to renounce, an anchor behind her keyboards.

Stevie Nicks has, as you might expect, six or seven dress changes (though, equally, Mick Fleetwood, who looks very late-'60s and Jethro Tull-like in his boots and waistcoat, has a gong at the back of his kit – often the sign of a dodgy band) but, in fact, these are all just part of the show. And anyway Nicks' real strength is her superb voice – deep (maybe deeper than Buckingham's, actually, and until I saw Fleetwood Mac live in London, I couldn't figure out which parts were sung by the chaps and which by the gals) and resonant and clear, as though she'd been gargling with redwood sap. Nicks can be a bit of a clown sometimes but she's great, really – think what you'd be like if you lived in California.

Each individual's instrumental and vocal accomplishments aside, however, what really makes this show work is that there are so many great songs in the set – since the release of *Tusk*, Fleetwood Mac effectively have twice as many songs at their disposal.

Backstage at this show promoted by Bill Graham (as featured in *Apocalypse Now*) at the Cow Palace (a mere 12,000 or 13,000 seater) there is a very good vibe. There is an undeniable elegance about the beechwood furniture and potted palms that fill the dressing rooms. John McVie is very happy. Slumping around in an old army fatigue jacket looking to put something in his empty glass, he seems pleased when I praise the show. "This is a great band," he nods to himself, and picks up a bottle of vodka.

Christine McVie and Dennis Wilson sit on a couch, canoodling and spooning like teenagers at a drive-in movie. Dennis seems pretty drunk, actually, or that's my interpretation of the near-total failure in communication that we experience when we try and talk to each other. Maybe it's just a bad case of culture gap. Oh well, surf's out – don't make waves. It seems that the entire Buckingham family is also present.



Dennis Wilson: possibly drunk

Mick Fleetwood and myself end up sitting round a tape recorder in the middle dressing room, the one with the urinals and toilets. It also has the F Mac oxygen cylinder and mask. This was a new one on me and didn't seem to work when I tried it. Presumably though, if all you do is breathe air-conditioned air in hotels and limos all your life, maybe you need a drop of the bottled stuff now and then. Perhaps it's the sort of breathing equivalent of Perrier water. I can't see it catching on in Bradford, though.

MICK FLEETWOOD WAS the original founder of Fleetwood Mac in July 1967, after he was kicked out of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers after a couple of months for drinking too much. Apart from Mayall himself, the lineup Fleetwood had been part of was completed by John McVie, who'd played with Mayall since the beginning of 1963, and Peter Green. Green followed Fleetwood shortly afterwards and an initially reluctant McVie joined in September of that year.

Prior to working with the Bluesbreakers, Fleetwood had been working as a decorator for a few weeks following the break-up of white soul roadshow The Shotgun Express, also featuring Rod Stewart. He is a man with a very absurd sense of humour that is rarely revealed in interviews, when he seems keenest to play the political spokesman role that is presumably a development of his also managing the band, a position he took over following the notorious occasion when their former manager, Clifford Davis, claiming to own the name

PETER STILL/REDFERNS, GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

Mick Fleetwood backstage circa 1980: "We've always changed a lot"

NIKKI ENGLISH/EVENING NEWS/REX

"Fleetwood Mac" and to be able to use it as he saw fit, sent a bogus F Mac out on the road in America in January 1974.

Fleetwood loathes the idea of managers now, and thinks that no band or artist should need one: "A good accountant and lawyer and a good tour manager – an old roadie can do that – are all you need."

Along with John McVie, Fleetwood's the real backbone of Fleetwood Mac. He's a formidable drummer, which is why it's very puzzling that his actual drum solo – with hand-held "talking" drum – should be so duff. Maybe it's hexed. These days, with his beard, he can look a lot like Donald Sutherland, which is very confusing considering that Sutherland starred in the remake of *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* which was, of course, set in San Francisco.

I try not to think about that too much and make a general opening remark about the manner in which the music scene, in England anyway, has changed since the New Ascension of F Mac. I tell Fleetwood the F Mac don't appear to have the same amount of abuse hurled at them as the likes of The Eagles or Led Zeppelin.

"Well," he replies, in not too practised a manner, "we've never stayed one way for very long, and I don't think we ever will. When the band first started Peter was writing and then 'Albatross' came out and people said, 'What the fuck's that?' Though people stayed loyal, too.

"We've always changed a lot, whether or not players have changed. We're actually afraid, I think, of getting into that rut, which can be very easy to do, and very awful, too. Especially when it's just so you can make a lot of money. Doing a double album didn't make any business sense at all but it meant a lot to us, artistically – whether we could still feel challenged. We really, really are pleased with it. We've also, I think, got enough discretion to know if the songs aren't up to standard, in which case we'd have just put out a single album.

> "EVERYONE HAS INFLUENCES – IT DOESN'T JUST COME FROM OUT OF THE SKY"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

We've got a great advantage, though, in having three very different songwriters. We're very lucky. When Danny, Peter and Jeremy were in the band they all wrote and played very, very different stuff. So in a way we're back to that sort of situation – we have the advantage of three very different styles. So it's come something like full circle."

Were you aware of just how strong the punk/new wave thing had become in England?

"No," Mick Fleetwood shakes his head, perhaps with no great passion, shrugging his shoulders as he continues in the slightly slurred, drawn-out syllables of the Home Counties rock'n'roll accent first popularised by such near-contemporaries as Mick Jagger. "Because we're not physically there... But I know there's a whole social thing going on."

"The good musical things," he continues more confidently, "will stay behind. Most bands that I know of didn't really have any great masterplan. They just started off listening to the blues and The Rolling Stones and Chuck Berry records, played the school dance or whatever and went on from there. Just went off and did it, and developed.

"It's not that evident over here. England's such a tiny place – all those great bands always come out of it. England brings out some kind of hardcore staying power. I don't think this country has that, because it genuinely isn't as hard here. I'm not saying people don't have a hard time here. Stevie and Lindsey certainly did..."

With Jungian synchronicity, or maybe just good timing, Stevie Nicks sticks her rather shattered-looking head round the door with all the experience of someone who's done a lot of waitressing. "Cheeseburger fries, kidney pie, potatoes and starch... Well, anyway, I'm sorry I broke in to your little tea party..."

She disappears. The door closes. Mick Fleetwood scratches his head, as though bewildered at this display of Rock Star Looning. "Gosh," he says, just like that.

Enough of this frivolity – on with the questions. Of course, one of the reasons you left England in 1974 was because you were so pissed off with living there...

"We were just pissed off with the whole thing, because basically Fleetwood Mac didn't mean a shit then in Europe. The band had changed, whatever we played wasn't appealing – the balls of the band, namely Peter, had gone. At that point, anyway, we were playing more and more over here.

"Also, I thought England was very grey and full of depressed people. All those kids were just reacting to that. I know that. We just got out. But it can never have that same effect in terms of the nucleus effect here, simply because of the size of the country. You can go through the whole Midwest and it's just not there."

Actually, when I was watching you onstage tonight I was thinking of the colossal sense of history in your songs...

"Yeah," agrees Fleetwood, pleased, "before I went on tonight I shouted out, 'You know what this is? This is the last three gigs of the decade.' And then while I was playing I was trying to count the years I'd been with John. I thought, 'God! Not so long now and it'll be something like 20 years!' That's what I mean – there's a lot of feeling up there, of people that have developed together.

Receiving their star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, 1980

"There's a lot of waste of talent that starts up and just fizzles out. You just see the spark of something and then they all start throwing TVs out of windows and showing they're a load of bastards."

You had the youth success thing...

"Yeah, but we held it together as a band. We were lucky – because of the people in the band we became involved in the thinking process of what we were trying to do. For ourselves. Selfishly, if you like. And we're still doing that. It's not just a crank-it-out-and-let-it-roll-in-until-it-stops-rolling-in number: 'Oh, I'll just do it for a few years and clean up.' This is a career. This is what we do.

"It's just a question of having some integrity about what you do, and we definitely try to have that. I suppose when we stop having that feeling then it will just be time to stop altogether... Rather than just an 'Oh, we'll do a quick tour and rake it in'. There's a lot of that goes on."

I think for quite a while after *Rumours* came out it was assumed that the next F Mac record would be a live album, after which you'd all retire...

"We've recorded some gigs on this tour. We do it every tour and they just get put away. They might be used some time. Who knows?"

At one stage, though, wasn't there talk of this double album being one record live and one record studio?

"I don't remember that. I think we thought of the possibility of going into a concert hall and just cutting these songs literally live. Live, these songs are very different. Without all the overdubs, they really kick ass.

"I think it'd be an interesting thing to do to just go in an empty hall and just develop the number in the same way you have to play it onstage. We don't do a lot of the stuff onstage. You can't get all those little tinkles and cymbals and tom-tom overdubs. You play the gut of the number. To approach doing some new tunes in that way could well be an interesting thing to try.

"A good live album can be great, but it's often treading water a bit, and a very easy thing to do. People say that we must be crazy that a band as big as we are haven't put out a live record or a *Greatest Hits* in between *Rumours* and *Tusk*. But it takes the freshness away of what we're trying to do. Of course, there'll be a *Greatest Hits* sometime. One day. As a final curtain, perhaps.

"But certainly now the intention is to keep on recording new stuff. Hopefully, the next album will be out a lot quicker than other people think. I think we'll just go for a quick one."

DID *RUMOURS* DO your heads in?

"Just the colossal success?" asks Mick, very matter-of-fact. "We were working a lot of the time on the road. Again, I just think we're lucky."

But did you feel it was becoming just a commodity?

"No. Because we don't let that sort of thing happen. If we wanted to utilise all the marketing resources we could make a lot more money, a lot more cash-in stuff. But that's going for a real cheap one. You shoot your integrity out the window... Because we're internally very... well, we look after our own affairs for a start, so we don't have anyone feeding us a load of bullshit on how great we are. So we're constantly having to make our minds up ourselves, which keeps you open. And I think that's kept us relatively sane.

"Of course there is pressure. And you just have to hang on to the same thing as you've hung on to for the last however many years it is. You just don't presume that you're anything special, ever. As soon as you do that, forget it.

"There's a lot of natural energy in the group. Without it, it wouldn't work. It's apparent to me that onstage, there's just genuine rapport. We know what numbers we're going to play next, but in point of fact it is relatively different every night. We need the subtleties that go between us onstage. We need to look at each other and know you're looking at someone and it feels good. I enjoy myself as much now as I ever have. It has nothing to do with how much money you've made or how well you're doing.

"I really don't think we'd be doing it if we weren't enjoying it. And equally, I know there are lots of people that make the choice to continue doing it, presumably because they're making a lot of money.

"This band," he adopts a Mancunian accent, "has got guts in it!"

Warners presumably wanted to do a huge number on *Tusk* to equal *Rumours*? The advertising campaign, etc...

"I think with any record company you have to just acknowledge that they want to make the record successful. And their measure of success is money. It would be naive of me to say we're totally oblivious to how much money you can make. But the music comes first, every time. Then maybe you can make some money. A lot of people approach it with 'This is the sort of music we're going to do to make the money.' And I shit on that, because the point of the music is lost. Gone. Totally. You're doing it just to make money. And people panic. 'We've got to sell so many units!' Give yourself a break. Please yourself. You might not go on selling billions...

"To me, an artist with a huge amount of integrity is Neil Young. He's doing exactly what he wants to do, he's always done that, and he's still bloody successful, too. Because people acknowledge the fact that he has artistic integrity, period. He's still great, still pumping away up there, still interested, still looking to grow. I remember talking to him, and he was absolutely intrigued – he'd even been to England – by all the punk rock things. You should use anything that comes past you. You should be open to all influences. And in turn you can then put out something which is really yourself – because everyone has influences: it doesn't just come from out of the sky. There are always reasons for everything.

"Music is a development of a whole load of things. As soon as you stop developing, then forget it. I mean, all the recent success has been very, very gratifying. And it's also really nice to know that you're not just jacking yourself off. First of all, we're pleased because it's happening just for us five people; then it's incredibly nice to know that other people really enjoy it, too, for however long they enjoy it.

"But, anyway, I'm repeating myself, but it means a lot to all of us."

AN HOUR OR SO LATER I'm sitting in the living room of Stevie Nicks' mock-Regency hotel suite. Stevie is drinking large Rémy Martins and appears to have something of a bad head cold. I ought to tell you what she's wearing but I can't remember; I can't keep up with all these changes. Certainly the most loopy member of the band, she suffers from having lived too long on the West Coast. Her patriotism and belief in America is quite absurd, though I'm sure she'll never see that, and wouldn't think of it in those terms anyway. She'll be good on chat shows in a few years time. On the *Buckingham-Nicks* album, released by Polydor in 1973 to no great success, there is a dedication to "AJ Nicks, the grandfather of country music." AJ Nicks was also Stevie's grandfather.

"He was a country singer and songwriter, very into it," she explains. "He wanted to take me on the road when I was four. But my parents

SIPA PRESS/REX

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS/REX. ANDRE CSILLAG/REX

wouldn't let him and he wouldn't speak to them for years. We actually sang together when I was that tiny. He was definitely the one who first got me interested in music."

With her penchant for writing numbers like "Rhiannon" and for Isadora Duncan-like stage moves Stevie Nicks is always, often not without irony, referred to as "the mystical member of Fleetwood Mac". Before we can begin the interview, she drapes all the lamps with antique shawls and scarves.

"But there's always been a very mystical thing about Fleetwood Mac," she says. "When I first joined Fleetwood Mac, I went out and bought all the albums – actually, I think I asked Mick for them because I couldn't possibly afford to buy them – and I sat in my room and listened to all of them to try and figure out if I could capture any theme or anything.

"And what I came up with was the word 'mystical' – that there is something mystical that went all the way from Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac straight through Jeremy, through all of them: Bob Welch, Christine, and Mick and John. It didn't really matter who was in the band, it was always just there.

"And since I have a deep love of the mystical, this appealed to me and so I said, 'Well this might really be the band for me, because they are mystical and they play wonderful rock'n'roll and there's another lady so I'll have a pal.'

"Not witchery. Not occult. Not turning into toads or anything like that. Just a freedom to be mystical."

It's the right of every human being...

"Because I am mystical, with or without Fleetwood Mac or Lindsey, and that's just me. And it's important for me to be free to do that. I'm a Gemini: a Gemini has two very opposite personalities. I have the moving furniture, cleaning-up-the-room-quickly side and I have the cream-coloured chiffon personality.

"I majored in speech communication at college – and psychology – and it all seems to work. I am a communicator. I love to talk, as you can see, and I love to make people understand, and to listen to them and understand."

A lot of good journalists are Geminis...

"When I stop this, I want to be a writer. I'm writing a book. I have this typewriter set up in there: a whole album and all the last tour are typed up."

There has, of course, been talk for some time about the possibility of Stevie quitting Fleetwood Mac to make a solo album and film based on her "Rhiannon" song on *Fleetwood Mac*, and she is said to have been made a number of highly lucrative offers. When I'd spoken to Fleetwood he dismissed the reports as nonsense: "Both Stevie and Christine definitely are going to make solo albums. I want to make one, as well, in Africa. But if we can't do that without having to split the band up, then it's a bit of a pity."

Nicks is equally scathing, claiming not to know where such reports come from: "I don't talk about it. If someone's saying these things, they're not coming from me.

"But the legend of the birds of Rhiannon is something that's incredible. It's just about a lady who's a goddess of steeds and a maker of birds. And her birds are three – a gold one, a green one and a white one. Those birds are able to take away pain: there's a song that they sing and when the song happens and you're in trouble the birds come on in and you just go to sleep and when you wake up it's alright. They're like an incredible pain pill."

Maybe Rhiannon's a brand name for morphine. But is that legend in something like *The Mabinogion*?

"That's *exactly* what it is," trills Stevie breathlessly, "it's an incredible thing, an incredible thing. I love it. And the 'Rhiannon' song is the song of Rhiannon. And birds seem to surround me a lot now. It's very strange and very pretty and very wonderful. It's just what it is now for Rhiannon. And she's very good, so it's all right; she keeps us.

"She is as much mine as I want. There are many connections. The last woman that wrote about her is a lady whose name is Evangeline Walton, who lives in Arizona and who must be about a hundred years old. Or at least 80 or 90. She started her work on Rhiannon in 1934 and finished in 1974. And I wrote "Rhiannon" in October 1974, when she'd finished.

"She's a tiny old lady with intense [*Stevie likes the word 'intense'*] grey hair. She never married. She lives in a tiny little house in Arizona which is all pink satin. Very much like me. She's very intelligent."

Ah, if there were any of it around I'd suggest Stevie had been smoking too much dope. Talking of which, though, it is true that if all this were pouring out of the mouth of a Jamaican Dread then I'd be much more prepared to go along with it. As it is, though, Stevie's enlightenment seems very much a product of the Guru Of The Month Club. Anyway, I attempt to relate all this to possibilities of apocalypse and F Mac's living in Los Angeles. Before I can really formulate what I'm saying, though, Stevie's glugging the old brandy down and is into a serious bit of communicating: "The most advanced city that can disappear the quickest... I just moved to the beach, to a place on the sand. I would never live there before, because I just thought, 'This is going to go so quick.' And then I thought, 'Well, maybe it'd be better to go quickly in the white sand and the clear water than to be up in Hollywood with all the people that were looting your house. Maybe I'd rather just float out anyway.' So I moved."

America, of course, I point out to Stevie, is a Gemini country – which is why there are such extremes in it...

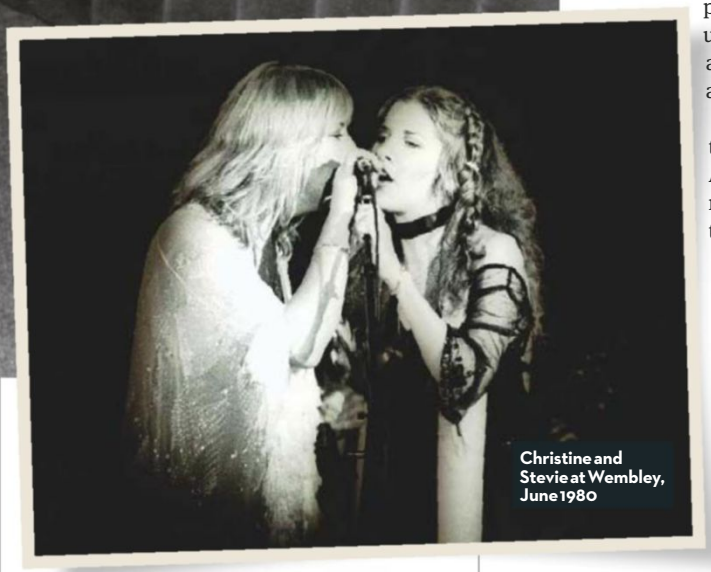
Stevie nods: "Very hardcore and very spiritual. And I do love the sunsets and the beautiful palm trees, but I also want to make millions of dollars.

"With all that's been going," she free-associates, "in the world of late, I have to admit to myself that for the first time in my life I have felt a little bit of fear about the world. And my world has always been wonderful.

"I have a friend from England who walked in and said, 'Well, England has declared they're on your side if something happens over this Iran thing.' And I'm thinking to myself, 'Well, I suppose that's good as I have so many wonderful English friends.'

"But the fact is that I didn't really want to hear that anyway, and it scares me. It's very difficult for us because we've never been through anything

Stevie taking a mystical nap, 1980



Christine and Stevie at Wembley, June 1980

like this – we just see it in movies. I've been watching it on TV, noon and night. On all the news programmes they have these flashes: 'America Held Hostage – Day 42'. But change the subject, because I really don't know anything more about it, except that it makes me nervous."

Well, all I know is that the Shah is an evil figure...

"What is he doing here? Especially what is he doing at a Marine air force base! Oh God! Ship him out. Take him to Bora-Bora. Get him a great hotel. I have no death wish for anyone, but get this person out of here! He must have no honour, or else he'd go straight back there, take a poisoned pill five minutes before he got off the plane, say 'I hate all of you and death to you' and walk off the plane and die."

Real neat, Stevie.

"That's what I would do if I were him! I would say, 'OK, I'm taking my pills and going off on my little cloud. But I'm not going to do this to America!'

"Break out the Kool-Aid! He's going to die anyway. He's old. The Ayatollah might as well paint on a little moustache. He could be the Ayatollah Hitler! This man is crazy. He's not thinking about those people. He's thinking about himself! He's on some high power trip!"

But what if it's not quite as we're being told?

"He could start an intense religious war. If he says, 'I will destroy you because you are impure,' then that is a religious war. And we say, 'We will destroy you in five minutes, Mr Shithead, with your beard and your robe and your stupid books on how we should live!' A weirdo looking like Rasputin who should've been born 50,000 years ago has no business being here now. He's a total space cadet. And we should send him to Mars. Tomorrow. I think we should kidnap the Ayatollah, put him in a spacesuit, and send him to Mars."

I'm sure the CIA already have that planned...

"I think in America everyone is very bummed, I think it is drawing the country together in a way I've never seen before. I think everyone is much closer. But I am angry. I think those people are unfair and unkind to do this to anyone. I think it's uncool and not acceptable."

But in that light do you think that your fellow Americans are giving more serious scrutiny to such matters as the CIA having killed Allende in Chile?

"I don't know anything about that. I couldn't even comment. I should know something about it."

Phew... Oh dear.

"Anyway," Stevie fetches some more brandy for herself and me and resurrects the situation, "I had a wonderful time tonight. I think San Francisco is so special – the place from which both Lindsey and myself came. There's something very magic about this place – for me, anyway. I burst into tears at the beginning of "Landslide". I had a lot of trouble getting through that song, because the Coffee Plant where Lindsey and I recorded everything to get us our first deal is about five blocks from the Cow Palace.

"And when Lindsey dedicated "Save Me A Place" to his mother I thought, 'Well, somebody has to remember his father, because he was so strongly behind us.' And when I walked out there and said, 'This is for Lindsey's father who should be here', I just went bleeechhh. You know how it is when you start to cry and there's nothing you can do to stop it. And I just couldn't do it. But at least I felt it was important for Buck that I remember he was a mainstay in the creativity and careers of Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks. Without him, it wouldn't have ever happened."

> "WE SHOULD KIDNAP THE AYATOLLAH, PUT HIM IN A SPACESUIT AND SEND HIM TO MARS!"
> STEVIE NICKS

CURRY GRANT, the F Mac lighting engineer who I believe has been involved with both Christine and Stevie in the past, enters the room looking for a drink. Stevie starts to talk about the new F Mac single, "Sara", her own composition: "The editing was cool. Any shorter than that and I'd have said, 'Forget it!' But they all know that this song is the pride and joy of my heart...

"I like 'Sisters Of The Moon' very much, but that was written about three years ago and it was very much myself to myself when I thought that I was gonna die, because I didn't understand rock'n'roll or touring and I thought I might collapse. Now I know I'm not collapsing for anybody, because I'm much too strong for that. But, at that point, I wasn't sure."

Does touring do you in?

"Oh, the first tour did. We left on September 9 and came back on December 22. We were doing four gigs in a row, one day off. No limousines. We started the *Fleetwood Mac* album in February of 1975. We joined the band on New Year's Eve, 1974. The album took three months. We went out for a few gigs in the summer which was no big deal. But then we went out on September 9, which was going into winter. It started out cold and it finished cold. We just never stopped. But we played everywhere. We didn't exactly play teen clubs, but we might as well have."

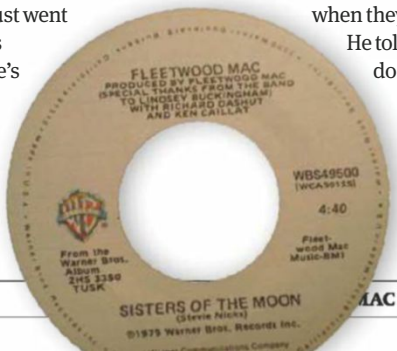
Curry: "Almost three quarters of the way through that tour was when the album took off."

Stevie: "We sold that album. We kicked that album in the ass... But Fleetwood Mac knew what was going on. Christine'd slept on amps in the backs of trucks. I hadn't a clue! But I decided I was going to make it all right. There was no-one going to say, 'She can't cope. She should give it up.' But no-one else can do that but yourself. No-one else can say, 'I don't want to go shopping. I don't want to go out to dinner. I don't want another drink.'

"Or at least if I stay up and rave all night I'm going to be in bed by six or seven, and if I have to knock myself on the head so I can sleep all day and sing that night then I will. In fact, I stay up all night every night. But I sleep in the day and don't do anything else. I haven't been shopping one time in 31 gigs. It's more important to me for people to say, 'She's really holding up. She's good,' than, 'She has a terrific new wardrobe.'"

Mitch, the tour manager, lumbers into the room. He is slightly drunk. He slumps down on the floor and begins talking to Stevie: "I've heard the tales of Nicks and Buckingham when they were paying their dues. He told me about the time he'd do supermarkets."

"Listen, I'll show," Stevie stands up and paces out a small area, "Here's our little sitting room, right? Here's Lindsey and about 11 other degenerates on the



Lindsey Buckingham, Rodeo Drive punk, 1980

ERICA ECHENBERG/REDFERNS

ground, smoking. And I am cleaning the house of our producer Keith Olsen for bread, right? This is 1971 in LA. I come walking in with my big Hoover vacuum cleaner, my Ajax, my toilet brush, my cleaning shoes on. And Lindsey has managed to have some idiot send him 11 ounces of opiated hash.

"Anyway, Lindsey and all his friends – Warren Zevon, right? – are in a circle. They smoked hash for a month, and I don't smoke because of my voice. And when you don't smoke there's something that makes you really dislike other people smoking. I'd come in every day and have to step over these bodies. Me, I've just been cleaning. I'm tired. And I'm pickin' up their legs and cleaning under them and emptying out the ashtrays.

"And a month later all these guys are going, 'I don't know why I don't feel very good,' and I'm going, 'You wanna know why you don't feel very good? I'll tell you why – because you've done nothing else for weeks but lie on the floor and smoke and take my money.' I was making $50 a week cleaning for the guy who did our albums."

Mitch: "I heard a story from Lindsey about you bunch doing bogus cheques in steak houses."

Stevie: "Lindsey and his friend Tom used to go into every coffee shop in Hollywood and write hot cheques and never go back again. The Copper Penny, Big Boy's..."

Mitch: "Boy, you two really fell into the American Dream, huh?"

Stevie: "Yeah. We actually fell into it out of nowhere. We were just nowhere."

THE NEXT NIGHT after the show I find myself locked away in the middle dressing room again with the urinals and the toilet bowls and Lindsey Buckingham.

Brought up in Palo Alto, some 30 miles to the south of San Francisco, Buckingham was turned on to rock'n'roll in the shape of Elvis, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry and Eddie Cochran by his elder brother. He started playing guitar, aged seven.

Pausing frequently for breath because he's so shattered – obviously the oxygen tank doesn't work for him – Buckingham talks about the new, stronger role he has on *Tusk*: "It's scary. What I'm doing now is... a lot of the way my songs turned out was just due to the basic approach.

"When we started the album we had a meeting over at Mick's house and I said that I had to get some sort of machine into my house to have an alternative to the studio. The trappings and technology of the studio are so great that the blocks between the inception of an idea and the final thing you get on tape are so many, it just becomes very frustrating.

"That was why my songs turned out the way they did, because of the belief in a different approach. For me, it wasn't really a question of changing tastes, but of following through on something I'd believed in a lot for a long time and hadn't had a means of manifesting. For a number of years it's been a process of having to sacrifice certain parts – say, for example, to give to Stevie to contribute to her music. It's always been a process of being in the back without... I mean, making the choice of joining Fleetwood Mac was a very strange decision. It's been a very human sort of journey. I'm sure I'm not making a whole load of sense," he blusters very defensively, and totally unnecessarily as he's making perfect sense. "It's pretty late in the evening to be talking about this."

Lindsey slumps back vacant-eyed into his chair. Thinking it may vibe him up, I suggest we smoke a joint. Goddamn! I should have remembered what Stevie told me about Lindsey being slumped out across their LA living-room floor... A few tokes and he's nodded out! [*So am I.*] We're carried to the limo, and the in-depth profile of Lindsey Buckingham will just have to wait.

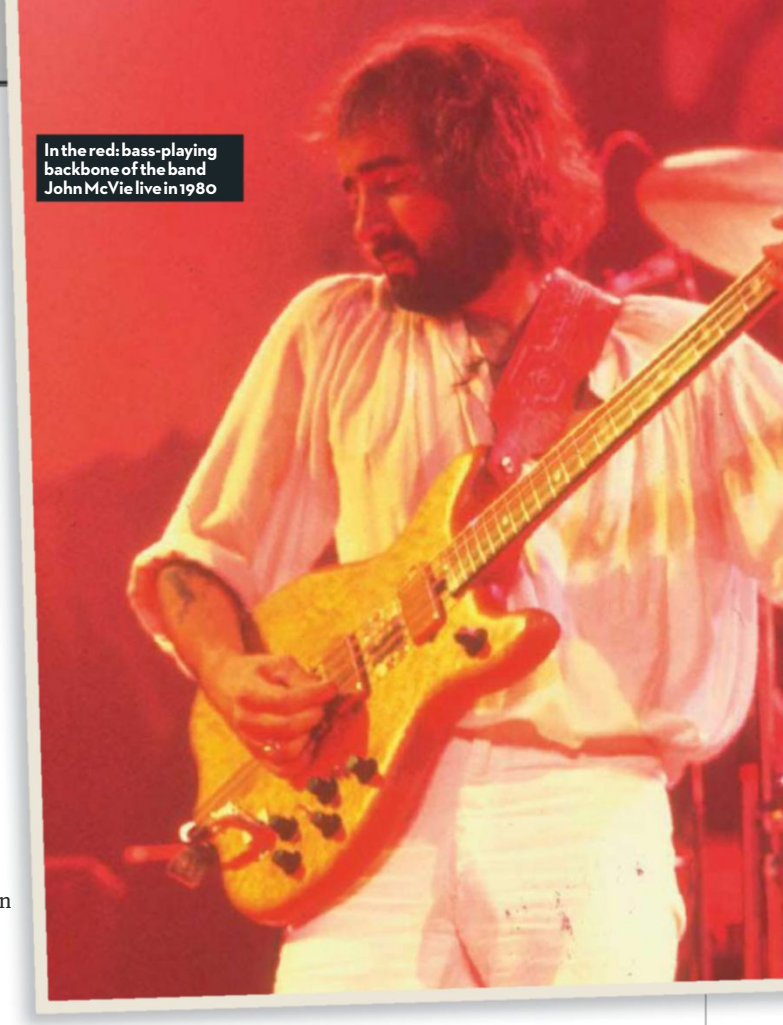
The appropriate sort-of ending: A few days after I return to England, I hear news of Peter Green. He's just been fined in court for kerb-crawling in some West London suburb like Osterley. Perhaps he was trying to pull women on their way back from Tupperware parties.

TAKEN FROM MM 5/7/1980

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM DRUMS his fingers constantly on the glass-topped table. It's not so much interview irritation as the kind of jerky excitement that's generated when general confusion meets personal creativity head on.

Let me explain. Lindsey currently finds himself in a curiously fraught corner. Fleetwood Mac have effectively come to another major turning-point in their chequered career, and he knows that the group will shortly have to undergo a full-scale sensitivity session in order to sort out what happens next. There's a host of private and professional predicaments to resolve. For a start, everyone is knackered, and bleary eyes can only hamper the decision-making process. Their mammoth stint in Wembley last week concluded an epic, nine-month world tour which was arranged in the wake of their last album, *Tusk*.

Because of the gigantic scale of such an operation – they have karate black-belt bodyguards, masseurs, make-up artists and, apart from Lindsey, personal secretaries – the actual band members rarely see each other offstage. Indeed, Lindsey had two days off in London and instead of checking out the local beat culture or visiting (ouch!) Buckingham Palace, preferred to stay in his hotel room with his girlfriend Carol and his beloved Teac recorder. That might be a sensible means of survival but it doesn't exactly help band solidarity.



In the red: bass-playing backbone of the band John McVie live in 1980

And then there's the aftermath of *Tusk* itself. The album didn't halt Burbank's financial recession as the toupéed execs had hoped. To date it's shifted around five million copies, which is but a drop in the ocean compared to the 21 million sales of *Rumours*. Although he denies any pressure from the boardroom, Buckingham isn't totally immune to the lack of public response. The album was a brave stab at doing something different from the New Hollywood AOR of *Rumours*, and the Buckingham contributions, in particular, created a harder, more incisive and contemporary feel than Fleetwood Mac had achieved before.

Still, Lindsey is stoical: "I don't think we were aware of how much of a chance we were taking in terms of business. I felt that having established a large audience, we were in a position to introduce a certain number of songs that people would want to like. But I didn't realise how stubborn people are.

"There are many other things involved, too. One is that it's a double album and there's a lot to wade through. Another is that we overcharged for it, which wasn't a conscious thing on our part, Warners suggested a price which was the price it went out at. It was certainly not an intentionally greedy move.

"It's been a strain personally for me in that I can't believe in myself as much as when I put the album out. I was just busting out to do something that I felt had a little more depth to it, something that didn't have a lead guitar solo in it like every other song you ever hear. But then, over a period of time, you realise that people aren't really getting the message. You start to wonder whether you've been deluding yourself or what – especially when the rest of the band start telling you that it's maybe time to get back to the standard format."

So the moguls did leave their mark – the kind that implies two steps forward inevitably lead to one step back. But Lindsey's affection, primarily for the other group members and secondly for the group-as-as-institution, won't induce him to divulge the finer footnotes here. He does, however, offer a sketchy overview.

"There's a lot of ego involved between five people and no-one particularly feels that they need to cling to the institution all the time. Because of that, you'll have, say, three different ways of looking at things in the studio and it won't be resolved for a week – something that maybe Peter Asher would go [*clicks fingers*] and that would be it. Confusion is always good for art because eventually the best thing gets hewn out of what's there and the formula goes out the window."

As the special thanks credit on *Tusk* reinforces, Buckingham was largely responsible for the new direction that the album took and so is in the most vulnerable position when the flak flies. But before you either sneer or reach for the Kleenex, remember that the move has had its more discomforting effects.

None of his songs ever get radio airplay because the dozy AM and FM programmers believe that they aren't representative of the Fleetwood Mac sound. In other words, they're scared to stick their necks out (and it's hardly that irreverent a move!) for fear of losing those crucial listeners. The situation becomes even more ironic when you realise that Lindsey wrote them with radio-play very much in mind.

"I'm one of those people who, if you turn on the radio, hears what's on the track in about three seconds, and that was the sort of effect I wanted to achieve with my songs on *Tusk*. If you heard a part of it on radio, it would catch you – but it hasn't caught a lot of people yet."

Matters aren't helped by Lindsey's new image as the Rodeo Drive punk. On stage, he looks completely at odds in his '80s-doused cropped hair and European Black compared to the others who cling to '70s chiffon, battered Levi's and greying ponytails. Paradoxically, it's mainly the British contingent (Christine, Mick and John), who've adopted the casual West Coast apparel while American-born Lindsey's taken up the Stateside version of Europe's modern look. Stevie Nicks is just, uh, mystical. The public also haven't liked that much.

> "I DON'T THINK WE WERE AWARE OF HOW MUCH OF A CHANCE WE WERE TAKING"
> LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

Lindsey recounts: "We were playing in Madison Square Garden and these guys in the front row said to me: 'You sold out.' They thought I'd sold out to what they believed was the Fleetwood Mac style, which should remain the same all the time. You know, Bob Dylan should still be playing acoustic guitar. So what can you do about that?

"I knew there was certainly a lot of controversy surrounding the album and me, and maybe it can be said that it was hurting the coherency of the band – whatever that means. But it's an honest thing. I just care about what I'm trying to do, and that's trying to improve. Maybe it's easy for me to say that because we have made a good chunk of money, but I look forward to being creative in the next decade, whether that's within Fleetwood Mac or in a different format."

He's already started to translate this plan into action. Everywhere he goes, he takes his trusty Teac (and Carol, natch) and experiments not only on new material but also the methods of presenting that material. He admires the working methods of new luminaries like Graham Parker, Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Brian Eno (though he'd never heard of that gent's oblique strategies) and, in particular, Talking Head David Byrne. So why doesn't he suggest a collaboration with the ostrich-voiced marvel?

The reply's a little bizarre. "If I was outgoing enough to go up to him and introduce myself, I might, but I just keep to myself a lot and maybe a lot of that's because I'm really locked into the microcosm of the band right now."

So, he stays indoors, with Carol and the Teac, and works. "I've just had so many hours of ecstasy seeing something come out and work and realising the connections that are possible and finding out what instinct really means as opposed to working through fear or through other people who are in the studio mainly to keep themselves covered.

"Studio musicians don't give a shit what they play as long as they play something good enough. That keeps everything down to a certain level of mediocrity because they're thinking of the football game they're going to watch after the session. And in many senses, producers are the same way. For most of them, it's a matter of not embarrassing yourself, not extending yourself too far, but keeping it all safe. Certainly that's true in LA."

All these sentiments are very laudable, but if he really is that keen to develop, isn't staying with Fleetwood Mac at the moment akin to treading water?

"Surely, that's probably exactly right. But there's nothing wrong with chomping at the bit if that's what you've got to do for a while. I'm not one for the random upholding of an institution, but Fleetwood Mac has been one for a long time and there's a lot of love and care between people, even if it's understated a lot of the time. It's a question of balancing confidence, ambition and humanity."

As Mick Fleetwood said some time ago, the band functions on a "chemistry based on compromise".

ROBIN PLATZER/THE LIFE IMAGES COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

RELEASE DATE 18 JUNE 1982

MIRAGE

With A streamlined response to *Tusk*'s sprawl, Fleetwood Mac begin a new decade with polish, '50s throwbacks and — of course — rampant dysfunction

BY MARK BENTLEY

AND SO IN 1982, Fleetwood Mac found themselves in the Mojave Desert, in a sandscape of broken mirrors, taking their first steps into the MTV age. At the helm for the elliptical video for "Hold Me" was director Steve Barron, the man behind the genius "Billie Jean" promo, Dire Straits' ubiquitous "Money For Nothing", and, perhaps less momentously, 1990's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie. "[*Fleetwood Mac*] were not easy to work with," he recalled later. "Four of them – I can't recall which four – couldn't be in the same room for very long..."

Christine reportedly spent hours in the make-up trailer. Stevie hated getting desert sand in her shoes. Lindsey, by some accounts, still wasn't over their break-up. Mick had just started an affair with Nicks' best friend. Dysfunction had always been at the heart of Fleetwood Mac's soap-opera appeal, but for eyewitnesses, filming was "a fucking nightmare"; the video's broken mirrors the perfect metaphor for a fractured formula, a hydra band struggling under the weight of its many heads.

> "THIS IS BABY-BOOMER POP MUSIC, MADE FOR OWNERS OF STATE-OF-THE-ART HI-FI SYSTEMS"

Where would Fleetwood Mac go after *Tusk*? That double-album groaned with ideas, with creative urgency – with three distinct songwriters pulling in dynamic and different directions. *Mirage* is its slimline, gym-bodied sister, and it couldn't be more different. It's endlessly polished, impeccably recorded; it's a beautiful commercial product.

Fleetwood Mac are often referred to as the epitome of AOR, but *Mirage* is baby-boomer pop music, made for owners of cavernous living rooms and state-of-the-art hi-fi systems. Like *Rumours*, *Mirage* is prized by audiophiles for its pristine sound quality. Like Billy Joel's *An Innocent Man*, it's an '80s album with a '50s fetish that sold squillions – and that no-one seems to mention anymore.

Songwriting had always been this incarnation's strong point. *Mirage* is easy on the ear, but the material comparatively thin. Many of the songs just float. You can listen to this thoroughly pleasant record for 30 years and still not be able to hum a bar of "Wish You Were Here" or "That's Alright". Believe me, I've tried. To find the Mac's very best songs of the period, you probably have to look elsewhere. Start with Stevie Nicks' first solo album, *Bella Donna*, released in summer 1981. Decked out with guest stars (Tom Petty, Duck Dunn, Roy Bittan from the E-Street Band), it was two full two sides of self-composed, pre-Raphaelite rock weirdness. It was everything you'd hope for from a Stevie solo effort, the album she wanted to make, and it stayed in the US charts for two years. Selfishly, though, you wish she'd held back songs of the shimmering quality of "Outside The Rain", "Bella Donna" and the awesome "Edge Of Seventeen" for her day job, and to have Lindsey Buckingham, not Don Henley, on duetting duties.

But then Buckingham, Mac's elfin creative director, was off doing his own thing, too. Released in late '81, *Law And Order* didn't match *Bella Donna*'s multi-platinum sales, but it still had its fair share of great songs. The Bonzo-Dog bonkers "Bwana", "That's How We Do It In LA" and the gently experimental, earwormish hit "Trouble" would all have added some power to *Mirage*'s polish.

And yet, despite the tensions, despite the issues within the band, despite its airbrushed, ochre-tinted cover art (has any man looked less comfortable in a white sports jacket than John McVie?), *Mirage* still has

CRITICS' VERDICT

"What's missing here is not provocative lyricism, original conception and a search for the altered states of musical being – that's not Mac's territory. They can only make this wispy nonsense."

RICHARD COOK, *NME*, AUGUST 14, 1982

multiple brilliant high points. After a meandering start, the album begins to spark with "Book Of Love", with its spiky melody, doo-woppish backing vocals, call-and-response lyrics and a nifty solo at the coda. That flows, rather classically, into Nicks' finest contribution to the album. *"So I'm back to the velvet underground/Back to the floor that I love..."* run the opening lines to "Gypsy". Sensuous and winding, it has all of the lace-gloved brilliance of "Rhiannon", "Gold Dust Woman" and "Sara" before it.

Then comes McVie's best offering, "Only Over You". Hopelessly romantic in a good way, it's stuffed with soppy sighs and dreamy vocals, as Christine coos: *"My heart's your future/Your future is me."* The inner sleeve's small-print dedication "With special thanks for inspiration to Dennis Wilson" has added poignancy. Within 18 months of the LP's release, the wayward Beach Boy was dead.

Side 2 – in old money – is where the action is. It kicks off with the Buckingham travelogue "Empire State", a wry, heartsick love letter to LA that twists and grinds around a delicate riff. Nicks' "Straight Back" is another sinewy, go-nowhere song. She's always been the band's most adventurous lyricist, and here she curls her voice around impressionistic lines: *"He remembers how good it can be/She remembers a melody."*

Next up, the lead-off single "Hold Me" – classic big Mac, with McVie and Buckingham sparring in glorious harmony. A McVie co-write with Tusk tour support act Robbie Patton, it has some of "Don't Stop"'s driving joy. The chorus is as radio-friendly as it gets, and Mick has a chance to slap the skins with intensity at the end. "Hold Me" was a belter of a hit in the US, but an inexplicable flop in the UK, even on its post-*Tango* re-release to promote 1988's *Greatest Hits*.

In Blighty, it was "Oh Diane" that broke the single charts, making No 9. Buckingham may well have been listening Talking Heads and Wire, but "Oh Diane" sounds like the result of an intense diet of '50s country pop, all *"wella-wellas"* and *"woah-oahs"*. Like the album as a whole, it's eminently listenable but undeniably light. "Eyes Of The World" is probably the closest *Mirage* gets to the kind of punchy pop vignettes Buckingham had contributed to *Tusk*. It's insistent, catchy, deceptively throwaway. This 42-minute LP ends, as it begins, with a wash of perfect production, and a song that just won't stay in your head. And like that, *Mirage* is gone.

The accompanying 1982 tour lasted just two months – September and October. It was restricted to 29 cities, in the US only. That probably tells you all you need to know about the strains within the band, and their appetite to support this slight masterpiece. *Mirage*'s glossy production hid a malaise at the heart of Fleetwood Mac. It would take more solo albums, solo tours and a large dollop of 'me'-time to set things straight.

TRACKMARKS MIRAGE

1. Love in Store ★★★
2. Can't Go Back ★★★
3. That's Alright ★★★
4. Book Of Love ★★★★
5. Gypsy ★★★★★
6. Only Over You ★★★
7. Empire State ★★★★
8. Straight Back ★★★★
9. Hold Me ★★★★★
10. Oh Diane ★★★
11. Eyes Of The World ★★★
12. Wish You Were Here ★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced: Lindsey Buckingham, Richard Dashut, Ken Caillat and Fleetwood Mac
Recorded: Le Château d'Hérouville, France; Larrabee Sound Studios and The Record Plant, Los Angeles
Personnel: Lindsey Buckingham (guitar, vocals, additional keyboards), Stevie Nicks (vocals), Christine McVie (keyboards, vocals), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion), Ray Lindsey (additional guitar on "Straight Back")
Highest chart position: UK 5; U 1

RELEASE DATE 13 APRIL 1987

TANGO IN THE NIGHT

Lindsey's on the way out, Stevie is just back from rehab and Christine is, of all things, happily married. The classic lineup's last studio triumph.

BY GRAEME THOMSON

STANDING ONSTAGE AT the O2 in London earlier this year, Lindsey Buckingham made a confession to 20,000 Fleetwood Mac fans. "*Tango In The Night* was a very difficult album to complete," he said. "We were living that lifestyle out to its ultimate conclusion." He then played "Big Love", the tightly wound lead single from the band's second most successful album (after the record-busting *Rumours*), and a song which exemplifies their timeless trick of sending deeply personal waves of paranoia and alienation hurtling towards the Top 10.

Once again, on *Tango In The Night*, Fleetwood Mac proved masters at mining commercial gold from the base metal of disarray and disharmony. These tales of rehab, untruths, uncertainty and betrayal come wrapped in a glossy pop-rock sheen which defines a decade's sound and sensibility just as persuasively as *Rumours* had a decade earlier. Multi-platinum success duly followed – no mean feat for an album which had begun 18 months earlier as a Lindsey Buckingham solo project.

> "WE WERE LIVING THAT LIFESTYLE OUT TO ITS ULTIMATE CONCLUSION"
> LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

Even for a band that had become a byword for soap opera-style shenanigans, it was a miserable time. The various excesses of their lifestyles had "degraded" – to quote Buckingham – to the extent that nobody was behaving with dignity, while the idea of sharing a stage or a studio seemed deeply unappealing. Three years on from *Mirage*, Fleetwood Mac was a band in name only, as financial mishaps, solo careers, deepening drug and alcohol habits and ballooning egos flourished. Gradually, however, Buckingham cajoled his bandmates into action, with the result that the guitarist's solo sessions with producer Richard Dashut morphed into a fully fledged Fleetwood Mac album.

Even so, whatever *Tango In The Night*'s attributes, a sense of sonic or emotional unity isn't high on the list. The last to show up for work was Stevie Nicks, who in all spent barely a fortnight in the studio. She was busy promoting a misfiring solo record, *Rock A Little* and, most pressingly, dealing with the fallout of a month in the Betty Ford Clinic in October 1986 to address her cocaine addiction. The band worked on her demos in her absence, their smouldering sense of resentment stoking an already uneasy atmosphere.

In the circumstances, it's hardly surprising that Nicks' contributions are relatively slight. One of *Tango In The Night*'s four big singles, "Seven Wonders" shackles a vaguely mystical lyric to robust '80s radio rock, the end result a mere scented candle and chiffon scarf away from Belinda Carlisle. "When I See You Again" is more promising, a slow, ethereal ballad on which Nicks asks, over and over, *"What's the matter, baby?"*, until one gets the impression of a woman pleading to the mirror. It's not much of a song, but the atmosphere is potent and Nicks dives in, even if her vocals betray the effects of a decade of hard living. Compared to the clean purity of "That's Alright" and "Gypsy" from *Mirage*, on *Tango In The Night* her voice sounds thin and nasal. "Welcome To The Room... Sara" is a meandering account of her time at Betty Ford (she checked in using the pseudonym Sara Anderson.) The song gamely shoots for some of the old drama, but it's a life experience in search of both melody and form, the lyrics clumsily prosaic.

In Nicks' diminished presence, it's Christine McVie who shines. Indeed, *Tango*

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The Mac are unshiftably hooked on old formulas that made them famous... They are the History Men of pop: out of date, dressed all wrong, and not funny."

CARMEN KEATS, MELODY MAKER, APRIL 18, 1987

In The Night makes a strong case for McVie's solid gold AM hooks and dreamy positivity being the purest distillation of modern Mac, a notion that the positive impact of her return to ranks in 2014 following a 16-year absence has done nothing to refute.

Newly married to keyboardist Eddy Quintela, she's loved up and mellow on "Everywhere" and "Mystified", two effortless, gliding love songs which slip down like a long glass of something sparkling. She brings a cool, uplifting melodicism to the break-up blues of "Little Lies", one of the few tracks which carries the weight of a genuine ensemble performance, the individual musical character of each member shining through. The voices of McVie and Nicks weave together on the chorus, Fleetwood thwacks away happily – in contrast to the programming which dominates much of the album – and John McVie's bass rides high in the mix. All of a sudden, they sound like a band again.

McVie ended up writing or co-writing half the album, a becalmed yin to the edgy yang of Buckingham, who takes on much of the heavy lifting and brings his jittery, vaguely esoteric sensibility to the fore. The brooding "Big Love" is not just a killer song, it's full of arresting sonic flourishes – sampled banjos, disembodied vocals, sudden fire bursts of guitar – and rolls along with a dark-eyed grandeur and plush eroticism, like a Southern Gothic take on Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill". "Caroline", too, displays touches of *Tusk*-era experimentation in the jerky rhythm and ululating female vocals which bookend the song, neatly off-setting a clattering chorus.

The quality control crashes completely on the insipid funk of "Family Man", while "You And I, Part II" is a malnourished disco-samba, the kind of dross parodied at the time by British comedy duo Raw Sex. Perhaps because it cleaves so closely to the production values of the age, *Tango In The Night* lacks muscle. "Isn't It Midnight" packs a moderate punch, and Buckingham finally lets rip on the atmospheric title track, but mostly it's a record with a soft underbelly.

The quartet of front-loaded hit singles just about hold a somewhat disjointed album together, but they couldn't do the same for the band. Shortly after the release of *Tango...* Buckingham departed, walking out prior to a mammoth world tour he simply couldn't face. They went on the road without him, drafting in Rick Vito and Billy Burnette. Buckingham wouldn't return to the Mac for a decade, a period that saw the band using varying combinations of core members to stay active.

There have been live rapprochements since, of course, but to date *Tango...* is the last studio album to feature all five of the band. It's a fitting legacy, somehow, for a record which stands as another shining example of victory snatched from the jaws of defeat, the sound of a group once again succeeding despite themselves.

TRACKMARKS TANGO IN THE NIGHT

1. Big Love ★★★★★
2. Seven Wonders ★★★
3. Everywhere ★★★★
4. Caroline ★★★
5. Tango In The Night ★★★★
6. Mystified ★★★★
7. Little Lies ★★★★
8. Family Man ★★
9. Welcome To The Room... Sara ★★
10. Isn't It Midnight ★★★
11. When I See You Again ★★★
12. You And I, Part II ★

Label: Warner Bros

Produced: Buckingham and Richard Dashut
Recorded: Rumbo Recorders, California; The Slope, California
Personnel: Lindsey Buckingham (guitars, vocals, synthesisers, percussion, drum programming), Stevie Nicks (vocals), Christine McVie (keyboards, synthesisers, vocals), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion)
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 7

RELEASE DATE 10 APRIL 1990

BEHIND THE MASK

Buckingham leaves, and is replaced by Rick Vito and Billy Burnette. But can anyone actually be bothered any more?

BY NICK HASTED

THE PRESS CONFERENCE to introduce the new Fleetwood Mac had been going well, but Stevie Nicks had something she wanted to say. "He'd rather I stayed at home doing the laundry," she claimed of her ex-lover and now ex-bandmate Lindsey Buckingham's attitude to her songwriting. "We are talking about a man who was in love with a woman, and would just as soon she had faded out and just been his old lady." Christine McVie groans, and Mick Fleetwood tries yet again to pour diplomatic oil on troubled waters.

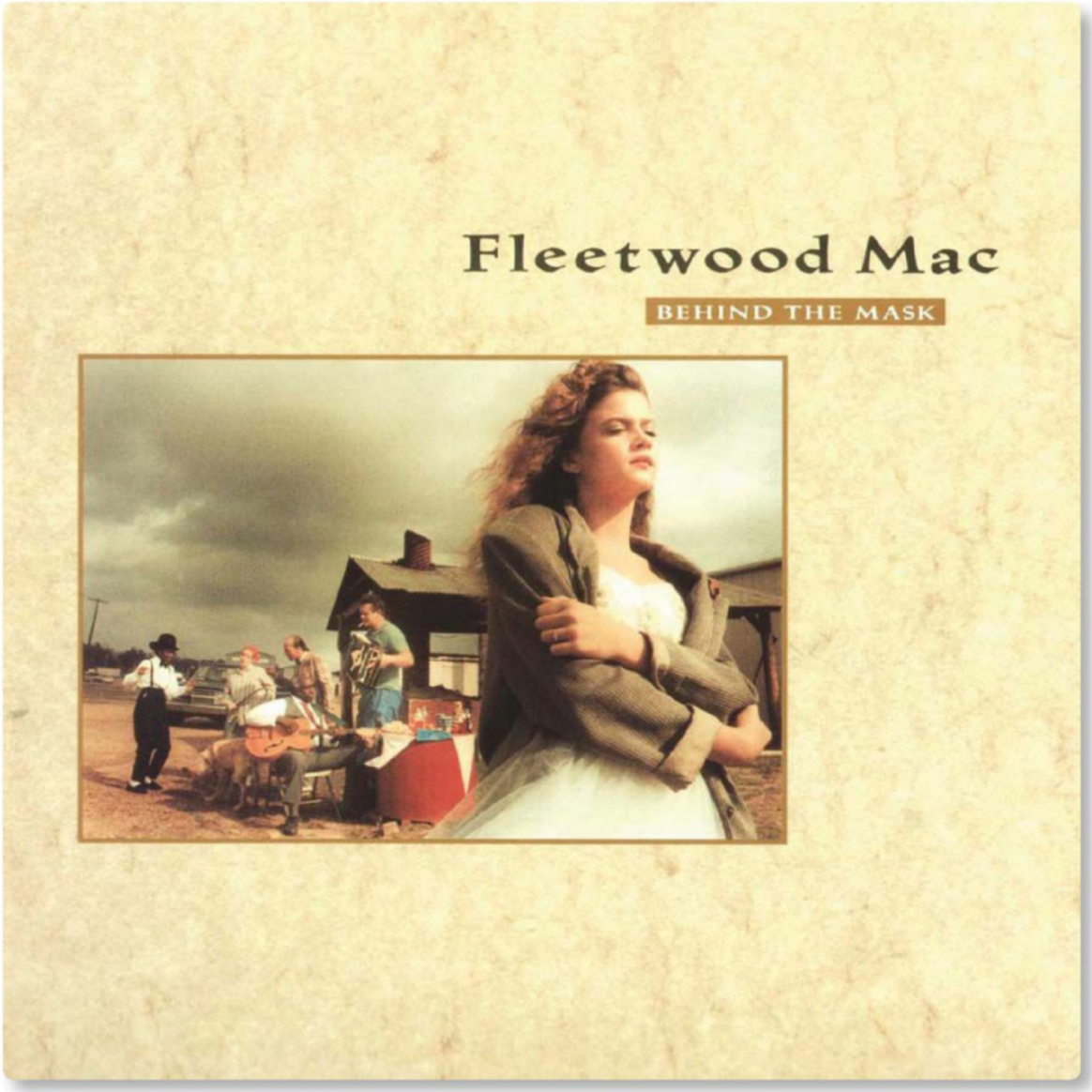
Earlier in '87, Buckingham's announcement that he wouldn't tour *Tango In The Night* had brought him and Nicks to furious blows. But the domestic drama which had distracted and fuelled Fleetwood Mac for the last decade was almost over. Nicks' latest flare-up was with a man who had left the room. Now the band were introducing the press to his replacements: Rick Vito (lead guitar, from John McVie's solo band) and Billy Burnette (rhythm guitar, and veteran of Nicks, Fleetwood and Christine McVie's solo work). Both were singer-songwriters, Burnette abandoning a burgeoning country chart career and work on Roy Orbison's swansong, *Mystery Girl*, for a gig he couldn't pass up. "These aren't just fill-in guys," Nicks said. "These are the group." Noting the band's halved Cali contingent, Christine McVie even dreamed Vito might help replace Peter Green. "I can see us getting back to more of a blues thing," she said.

> "THERE WAS NO BOOZING, NO SESSIONS AFTER MIDNIGHT, NO TWO-DAY BINGES"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

There were few complaints at Buckingham's stand-ins as they helped sell *Tango...* on the hugely lucrative Shake The Cage tour. Nicks and McVie chipped in a song each for 1989's equally successful *Greatest Hits*, McVie's "As Long As You Follow", in particular, sounding a worthy, lost *Tango...* single. But an album was something else. Buckingham and co-producer Richard Dashut had been in charge of "the ideas and the sound and the production", admitted Christine McVie, who remembered her role as vetoing Buckingham's more "left-wing" notions. None of the core band's remainder liked to lead, with only Nicks enjoying being solo. And her protest about misogyny ignored her inability to contribute much to *Tango...*, switching from cocaine addiction to dependence on its prescribed cure, Klonopin tranquilisers. In theory, Fleetwood Mac had just lost one writer and voice out of three. In theory, The Doors' music should have been fine without Jim Morrison.

Up against it and a man down again, the band put their usual long shifts in during *Behind The Mask*'s LA and Phoenix sessions. "Between *Tango...* and this album, which took eight months of solid work," said Fleetwood, "there was no boozing, no partying, no sessions after midnight, no two-day binges." Maybe a binge, fight, affair or split would have helped. Having spent four years largely apart prior to *Tango...*, and a full 13 years after *Rumours*, the classic Mac had little reason left for friction. The new boys had no time to learn the veterans' language, or add another twist to the soap. They all had something to prove, but Nicks and Christine McVie needed cajoling even to make *Tango...*. Passion and desire of every sort had ebbed.

Behind The Mask opens cautiously. "Skies The Limit", like "Little Lies", is a McVie co-write with her partner and touring Mac keyboardist Eddy Quintela. But the sleek yet airy purity of her *Tango...* work is weighed



CRITICS' VERDICT

"Arguably the creators of one or two decent tracks in their time, FM have now really disappeared up their own Mac passage."

ANDREW COLLINS, NME, APRIL 28, 1990

"The basic style has changed not a jot since the mid '70s, which goes to show how far ahead of their time Fleetwood Mac and *Rumours* were, predicting the AOR sound of the next 15 years. Either that, or the band are now hopelessly out of step. Whatever."

BOB STANLEY, MELODY MAKER, APRIL 28, 1990

down by more conventional, creaking AOR baggage, not least Burnette and Vito's gravelly harmonies. *Tango...* had triumphed by not only taking on, but improving, '80s production styles. The new Mac really sounded like dinosaurs now, misplacing their own special lustre. Vito's first solo, meanwhile, isn't Peter Green, but has a fairly pleasant, languid blues sound. His co-write with Nicks, "Love Is Dangerous", more explicitly marries his blues-rock with her gauzy Californian Gothic, as she warns, *"Be careful who you please."* Maybe Buckingham was on her mind, but John McVie's funk bass riff is more impressive than her phoned-in lyrics here. *"Hearts made of crystal crumble like castles of sand,"* is a metaphor no-one else could mix.

"In The Back Of My Mind", by Burnette and fellow country hit-writer David Malloy, is *Behind The Mask*'s seven-minute attempt to prove they didn't need Buckingham to experiment. A portentous intro tries out Mick Fleetwood's latest investment, the Hotz MIDI translator, a wearable, touch-sensitive drum device which didn't catch on. "Tusk"-style drum tattoos, gongs and triangle chimes follow. But its Christine McVie's minute of McCartney-style, warm clarity in the middle eight which lets this ambitious failure breathe.

"Do You Know", a McVie co-write with Burnette, lent a faintly baroque air by a synclavier, is an airy wisp of a song. "Save Me" (written with Quintela) is a more boisterous if minor-league McVie ballad, her vocal floating upfront. The title song is the nearest to a major song by her – its dreamy, Manzarek-style keyboard washes, ominous yet creamy backing vocals and even a Buckingham cameo on acoustic guitar create a '60s-hinting atmosphere.

Nicks' doleful wail on "Behind The Mask" is typical of her absent-minded presence on others' songs, seemingly scissored in briefly to confirm this is Fleetwood Mac. Her own best efforts are the Mike Campbell co-write "Freedom", sprightly pop over which her voice scratchily drawls down its own path; and closer "The Second Time", a slip of a ballad unlike anything else on the album. It has a peaceful simplicity, where production elsewhere puffs to keep up with the times.

Burnette and Vito contribute five co-writes each, generally bolstering their employer/bandmates' efforts like the experienced session men they are. Their own songs are the sort of cleaned-up country and rockabilly they wrote on their own time. They're doing a decent job, but for some other band.

Behind The Mask's patched-up, aimless nature, and the reluctant commitment of everyone except Fleetwood Mac's founders, meant Nicks and Vito had wandered away before they recorded again.

TRACKMARKS BEHIND THE MASK

1. Skies The Limit ★★
2. Love Is Dangerous ★★
3. In The Back Of My Mind ★★★
4. Do You Know ★★★
5. Save Me ★★★
6. Affairs Of The Heart ★★
7. When The Sun Goes Down ★★
8. Behind The Mask ★★★
9. Stand On The Rock ★★
10. Hard Feelings ★★★
11. Freedom ★★★
12. When It Comes To Love ★★
13. The Second Time ★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced: Greg Ladanyi and Fleetwood Mac
Recorded: The Complex, Los Angeles, Vintage Recorders, Phoenix, Arizona
Personnel: Stevie Nicks (vocals), Christine McVie (vocals, keyboards, synths), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion), Billy Burnette (guitars, vocals), Rick Vito (guitars, vocals), Stephen Croes (synclavier, synths, keyboards, percussion), Lindsey Buckingham (acoustic guitar on "Behind The Mask"), Asante (percussion on "Freedom")
Highest chart position: UK 1; US 18

RELEASE DATE 10 OCTOBER 1995

TIME

Delaney & Bonnie's daughter, Traffic's guitarist, no Buckingham, no Nicks, and a poem from Mick Fleetwood... The strange affair of "Mini-Mac".

BY JOHN LEWIS

THIS SHOULD HAVE been a triumphant comeback album. Bill Clinton's campaign team chose "Don't Stop" as its anthem in the run-up to the 1993 election, and the classic *Rumours* lineup were more than happy to reunite for the new president's inaugural ball, at the personal request of the Clintons.

"However," says Mick Fleetwood in his 2014 memoirs, *Play On*, "getting us all back onstage didn't spark a reunion as many, myself included, had thought it would." Mick and John were able to convince Christine McVie to work on the album, but she wouldn't come on the tour that preceded the LP's release. Lindsey Buckingham, who had noisily left after 1987's *Tango In The Night*, didn't want to return, and neither did Stevie Nicks, who had departed after 1990's *Behind The Mask* to conquer various health problems and concentrate on her solo career.

Nicks is replaced by singer and songwriter Bekka Bramlett (the daughter of husband-and-wife blue-eyed soul duo Delaney & Bonnie), while one of Buckingham's replacements is former Traffic guitarist Dave Mason, who shares vocals and guitars with country-rocker Billy Burnette (who had been drafted in before *Behind The Mask*).

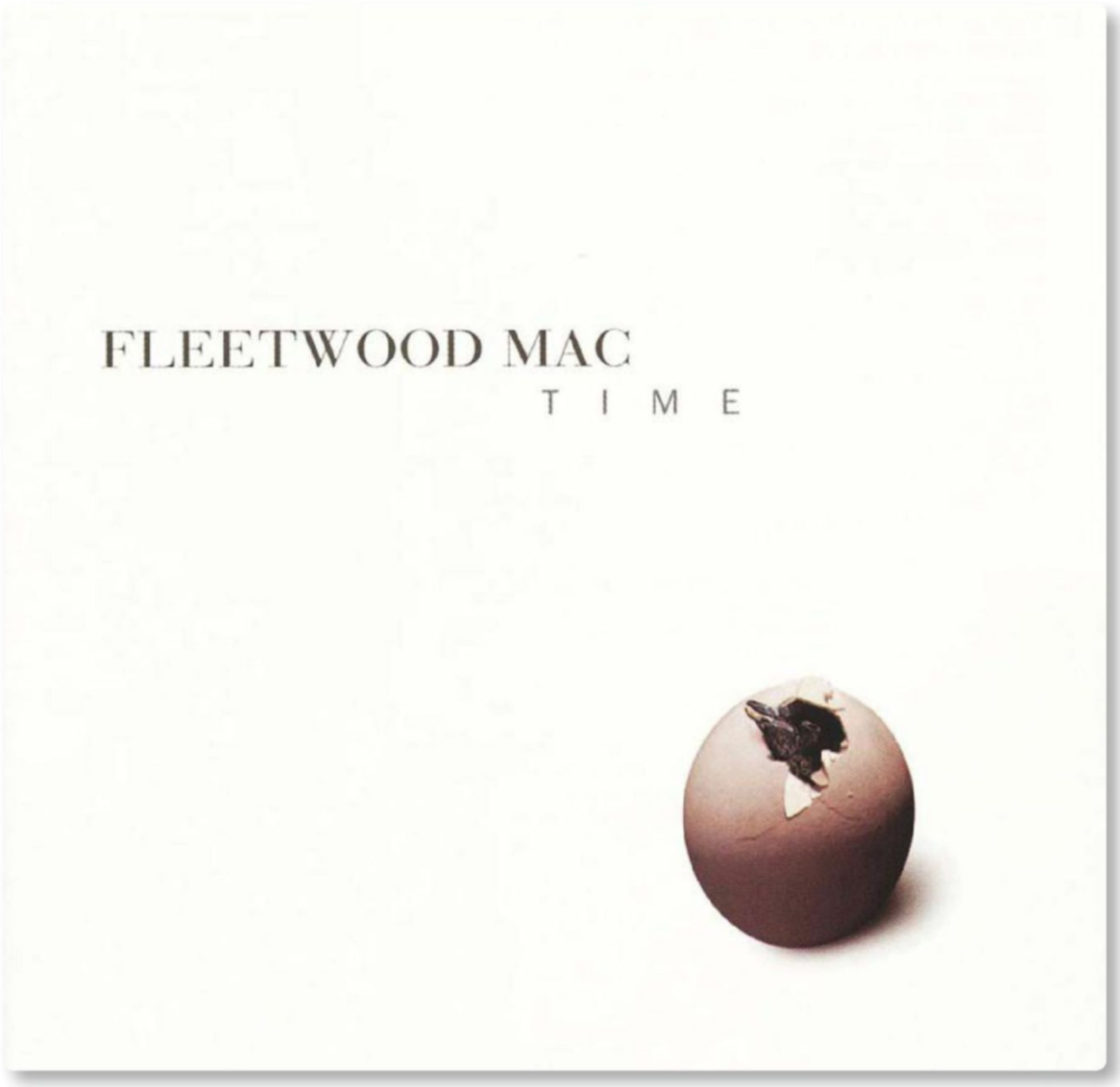
So, while the "Fleetwood" and the "Mac" were present and correct, there was no Buckingham and, for the first time in two decades, no Nicks. With more than a dozen hired hands (session players, co-writers, etc) *Time* scarcely qualifies as a Mac LP in the eyes of many fans. Mick later described the lineup as "Mini-Mac", but *Time* is the point where the philosopher's axe that is Fleetwood Mac had changed its blade so many times it had become almost unrecognisable.

> "THE ALBUM NEVER REALLY GOT PROMOTED AT ALL, WHICH WAS A PITY"
> DAVE MASON

Commercially, it was a disaster, chalking up 85,000 sales (around 1/500th that of *Rumours*), not making the *Billboard* Top 200 (the first Mac album since 1968's *Mr Wonderful* to befall that fate) and struggling to the lower reaches of the UK chart, while its sole single, "I Do", only registered in the back end of the Canadian charts. "Unfortunately the album never really got promoted by Warners at all," said Dave Mason, many years later. "They let it sort of die, which was a pity." Even Stevie Nicks' career-low *Street Angel*, released a year earlier, sold more copies.

In the absence of Nicks and Buckingham, it falls upon Christine McVie to impose some *Rumours*-era authenticity to the project. While Nicks' honeyed rasp has always been the ethereal soul of the band , it's McVie's comforting sigh that remains the band's earthbound, corporeal heart. Her tracks on *Time* are predictably the album's highlights. She co-writes five songs with her then-husband, the Portuguese keyboard player and studio engineer Eddy Quintela, who had been her songwriting partner since *Tango In The Night*'s "Little Lies".

There are the usual paeans to romantic devotion we associate with McVie. "I Do" is a pleasantly soppy rocker where she declares *"I love you for what you are,"* while "Nights In Estoril", filled with melancholy minor-sevenths, also seems to be directed at Quintela (*"You my love, how you kept me warm"*). Yet, even with both of these songs, there's a nod to her troubled time in the band. *"There will be times/When we can't agree... as time goes sailing on/How can something so right/Ever be wrong?"* she sings on "Estoril"; while "I Do" could serve as a bittersweet love letter to the band. Her other lyrics certainly



suggest a need for escape and closure. "Hollywood (Some Other Kind Of Town)" is the sound of an Englishwoman who has spent more than two decades in Tinseltown, is thoroughly sick of the *"loud days and endless nights"* and wants out (*"I don't care for sunny weather/I like the change of season better/I like the feel of rain upon my face"*). Ironically, if it's the sound of someone longing to retire to a farmhouse in Kent, the music seems to be dragging her back to California, with Brian Wilson-style chord changes and lavish Beach Boys harmonies (a nod, perhaps, to McVie's old flame, Dennis Wilson). Even more explicit is "All Over Again", a majestic waltz that serves as her farewell to the band. *"Well it's time to say goodnight/And finally turn out the light,"* she sighs, over heart-wrenching chord changes. *"It's time to move on, don't you know."*

McVie's five tracks – including "Sooner Or Later", which wouldn't sound out of place on *Mirage* or *Tusk* – are the songs that will be of primary interest to most Mac fans. The rest of the LP has redeeming qualities – it's just that little of it sounds anything like Fleetwood Mac. Dave Mason co-writes two numbers: "I Wonder Why" does at least make an effort to sound like a classic-era Mac song, though "Blow By Blow" is a fairly anonymous, chugging rocker.

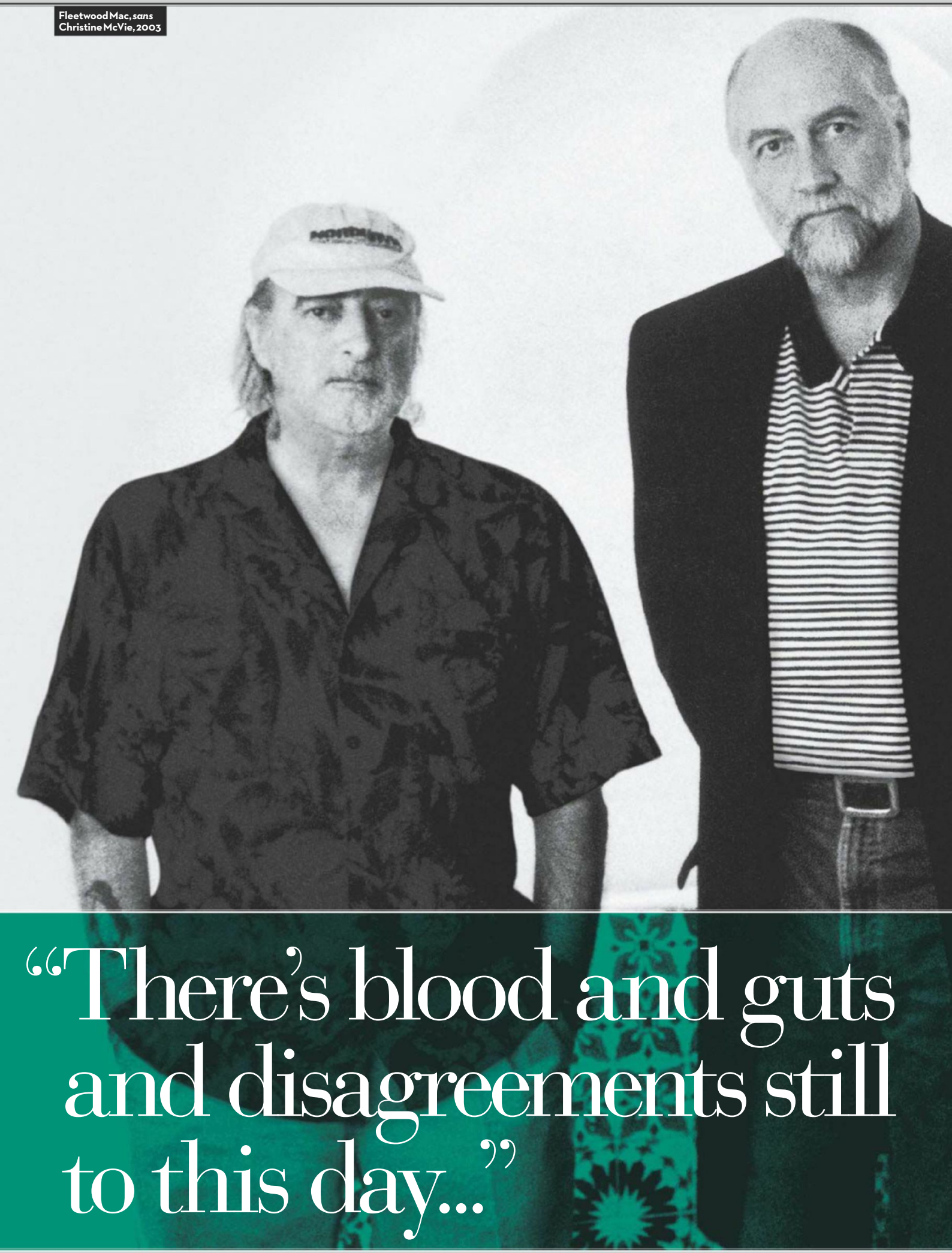
The key partnership in this lineup is between Bramlett and Burnette who, two years later, formed a country duo, Bekka & Billy. Many of the songs sound like rehearsals for that project. "Talkin' To My Heart" is a midtempo Nashville number with fine hillbilly harmonies. "Dreamin' The Dream" is a drumless, acoustic ballad that's Bramlett's finest vocal performance here, while she also shines on country rocker "Nothing Without You", co-written with her father, Delaney. (It also sees Lindsey Buckingham making a low-key guest slot, helping with the heavenly vocal harmonies.)

Last – and by many means least – on the album is the bizarre closer "These Strange Times". Over music written by Ray Kennedy (the co-writer of the Beach Boys' "Sail On Sailor"), Mick Fleetwood recites his own poetry. *"These strange times I think of a friend they said was a man of the world,"* he intones, clearly a nod to Peter Green. He goes on to declare his love of his old mentor and bemoan the cosmic injustice of mental illness (*"I look to the sky and cry out/God is nowhere, God is nowhere"*). There's no doubting the sincerity of Fleetwood's poetry, nor the harrowing subject matter – it's just that Fleetwood's grave monotone and the funereal accompaniment is almost unlistenable. It's a weary and unsatisfactory closer to a weary and unsatisfactory album.

TRACKMARKS TIME

1. Talkin' To My Heart ★★★
2. Hollywood (Some Other Kind Of Town) ★★★
3. Blow By Blow ★★
4. Winds Of Change ★★
5. I Do ★★★
6. Nothing Without You ★★
7. Dreamin' The Dream ★★★
8. Sooner Or Later ★★★★
9. I Wonder Why ★★
10. Nights In Estoril ★★★
11. I Got It In for You ★★
12. All Over Again ★★★★
13. These Strange Times ★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced: Fleetwood Mac, Richard Dashut, John Jones and Ray Kennedy
Recorded: Ocean Way Recording and Sunset Sound Recorders, Hollywood, California
Personel: Bekka Bramlett (vocals), Dave Mason (guitar, vocals), Billy Burnette (guitar, vocals), Christine McVie (keyboards, vocals), John McVie (bass), Mick Fleetwood (drums, vocals). Also: Michael Thompson (guitars), Steve Thomas (keyboards), Lindsey Buckingham (backing vocals), Fred Tackett (trumpet), John Jones, (keyboards, bass, guitar), Lucy Fleetwood (backing vocals)
Highest chart position: UK 47; US n/a



Fleetwood Mac, *sans* Christine McVie, 2003

"There's blood and guts and disagreements still to this day..."

"But that," says Mick Fleetwood, "is what makes it mean a shit." As the band reunite for *Say You Will*, **NIGEL WILLIAMSON** goes to LA to piece together the complete, harrowing saga of the Buckingham-Nicks years. Involves era-defining records, unfeasibly complex relationships and industrial quantities of champagne and cocaine. "We were in the worst shape," Stevie Nicks says. "But it helped us make the best music."

AUGUST 7, 1987. Fleetwood Mac are enjoying a third burst of success after the Peter Green/"Albatross" years and *Rumours* heyday. Their new album, *Tango In The Night*, has just topped the charts in Britain and America on its way to global sales that will eventually approach 10 million. But all is far from well in the camp. When the band meets at Christine McVie's Hollywood home to resolve their differences, the atmosphere is venomous.

A row breaks out over Lindsey Buckingham's refusal to tour, and when former lover Stevie Nicks tries to remonstrate with him, the highly strung guitarist explodes. "Get this bitch out of my way. And fuck the lot of you!" he screams, as he pushes her over the hood of his car and delivers a slap. Vowing never to speak to the band again, he drives off into the sunset with the parting shot, "You're a bunch of selfish bastards!"

Flash back another decade. You could be forgiven for thinking that the pinnacle of Fleetwood Mac's convoluted, incestuous, drug-fuelled, trash-novel insanity had been reached in 1976 when they were recording *Rumours*. In fact, it was only the start of what was to become rock'n'roll's longest-running real-life soap opera.

The omens could not have been less propitious when the band went into the Record Plant studio in Sausalito, San Francisco. Their previous album, 1975's *Fleetwood Mac*, sat at the top of the US charts. But nobody knew if they could stay together long enough to complete the follow-up.

The torrid six-year romance between Nicks and Buckingham has recently ended in bitterness and rancour and the two are only speaking to each other to hurl insults and recriminations. John McVie and Christine McVie, married for eight years, are not speaking at all, except through the expensive lawyers negotiating their messy divorce. Mick Fleetwood is going through a divorce of his own and is about to complicate matters further by embarking on an affair with Nicks.

Outside of being trapped in the same band and writing songs to each other, detailing every jealousy and betrayal in the emotional maelstrom they have created, the only common currency is the huge, velvet bag of cocaine which engineer Ken Caillat keeps under the mixing desk and which the band demands at regular intervals to 'refresh' themselves.

Yet out of this traumatically troubled and tangled web comes the bestselling album of all time (at least until Michael Jackson cleans up with *Thriller*). *Rumours* will shift more than 25 million copies and set Fleetwood Mac up on millionaires' row for life, an amazing achievement for a band – one with an entire pre-history – born out of the British '60s blues boom.

The phenomenal success of *Rumours* keeps Fleetwood Mac together. But it's against all rational judgement, and at a price. In the intervening decade, the dysfunction and trauma they used to such positive and creative effect on *Rumours* has gone from bad to worse. Much worse. With lifestyles that would not have been out of place on the set of *Dallas* or *Dynasty* and the most outrageous touring circus this side of Led Zeppelin, the band descends into a collective drink and drugs hell.

> "WITH CHRISTINE IN THE BAND WE HAD A FEMININE POWER. I WISH SHE'D STAYED"
> STEVIE NICKS

Excess of every kind is the order of the day. Nicks has an affair with Don Henley of The Eagles, falls off stage and checks into the Betty Ford Clinic for cocaine addiction. Then, on her release, she sinks into an even deeper and more debilitating dependency on the tranquilliser Klonopin and nearly dies all over again. John McVie has an alcohol-induced seizure and is busted at his Hawaii home with four-and-a-half grammes of pure cocaine and a collection of illegal firearms. Christine McVie has an affair with the band's lighting director and then falls for Beach Boys wild-man Dennis Wilson. By her own admission, it's taking a magnum of vintage Dom Perignon a day just for her to get by. Mick Fleetwood is busy blowing his millions on debauchery and is deep in his own brain-frying self-destruction, involving industrial quantities of cocaine washed down with bottles of brandy.

By 1986, when it comes to recording *Tango In The Night* after a four year lay-off, the task of ensuring the record is not a complete disaster has fallen overwhelmingly on the intense and nervy figure of Buckingham. Nicks, little more than a sedated zombie, barely attends the year-long sessions, and Buckingham is forced to doctor the tapes to kid the world into believing she is on songs she's never even heard. A half-crazed Fleetwood spends much of the recording nodding out in a Winnebago parked outside Buckingham's home studio. John McVie only turns up when absolutely necessary to put down his basslines, while his ex-wife Christine, for whom he still carries a torch, views all the madness with increasing distaste.

Left to fashion the album almost single-handedly – and having successfully delivered his less-industrious colleagues yet another bank-filling, career-saving, multi-platinum winner – Buckingham decides he has finally had enough. He will not tour. His colleagues are appalled. However out of it they may be, they're not too far gone to realise that, without their main musical focus, they're in trouble.

Throughout the summer of 1987, the rest of the band has attempted to twist his arm to join them on their forthcoming world tour. At one point, Buckingham's agreement appears to have been secured and a celebratory dinner is arranged. By that evening, he has changed his mind again and fails to show up at the restaurant.

Tired of his vacillating, the others summon him to a final showdown at Christine McVie's house. When their pleading and cajoling continues to fall on deaf ears, the exchanges grow angrier. Finally, when Nicks intervenes, Buckingham snaps. Although the couple had broken up way back in 1976, a decade's worth of pent-up emotion spews forth and Buckingham walks out on the band.

MORE THAN 15 YEARS LATER, Buckingham is back, rehearsing for a new stadium tour at Culver City Studios, Los Angeles, and with a new Fleetwood Mac studio album, *Say You Will*. Christine McVie has gone, having moved back to England to retire with her husband to a big house in Kent. Otherwise, it is the classic Fleetwood Mac lineup. Older and wiser and a little less volatile. But back with the same melodic and beguiling sound they perfected on albums such as *Fleetwood Mac*, *Rumours* and *Tusk*.

And after years of being regarded as the enemy, it seems that Fleetwood Mac are cool again. "I think the intriguing thing to a lot of people is that there's never been a period in rock as debauched as the period after *Rumours*," said Courtney Love, who in the late '90s covered Stevie Nicks' cocaine-inspired "Gold Dust Woman". "Nobody's touched it."

Ex-Smashing Pumpkins leader Billy Corgan is another fan (in the mid '90s he recorded a cover version of "Landslide" from 1975's *Fleetwood Mac*). And when *Uncut* recently visited Tricky at his home in Venice Beach, California, he was playing Fleetwood Mac, proclaiming them to be "fucking brilliant".

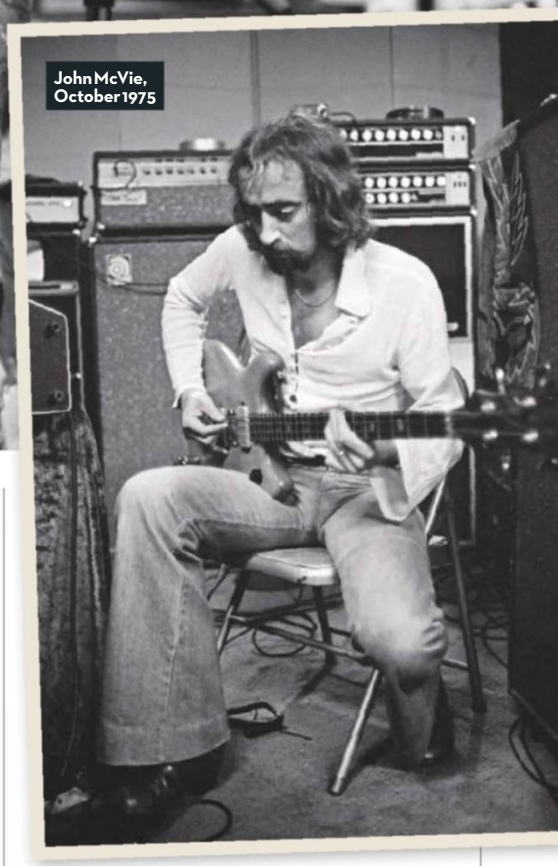
For Buckingham, *Say You Will* is the first Fleetwood Mac studio album he has been involved with since the fateful *Tango In The Night*, and although he disputes some of the details of the confrontation that resulted in his 1987 departure, he concedes euphemistically it was "not a happy day". Yet he regards the new album as a "vindication" of his walkout. "If I hadn't left then, I wouldn't be in this place now," he reasons. "So it all makes sense in some way. That's part of the beauty of us being back together."

Now 55 years old, Lindsey Buckingham seems far more relaxed and much less intense than the character we met during Fleetwood Mac's 1997 reunion tour. Sitting cross-legged and relaxed on a couch at the Culver City Sound Stage rehearsal space in LA, he scratches his head and laughs a lot. When the band's US publicist sticks her head around the door to say, "Five

Christine McVie at the early recording sessions for *Rumours*

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

In the studio working on *Rumours* in '77



John McVie, October 1975

more minutes," he replies, "Hey 10, 15, whatever, it's cool."

"I'm now married and I have a four-and-a-half-year-old son and a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter," he explains. "I think all that calms you down in increments, without you even being aware of it. You get more balance and you feel like there's something greater than yourself in the scheme of things. I'm just happier. I spent quite a few years in emotional exile and that includes all my time in Fleetwood Mac, really."

There was never a time in the band when his relationship with Nicks wasn't characterised by "dysfunction" and "denial", he says with total candour. "That sounds strange, when we had split up so many years earlier. But most couples in that position don't carry on seeing each other all the time. Being in a band is like still living with someone. We weren't able to resolve things because I don't think we were focused enough even to know what needed to be resolved."

Even on the 1997 tour he feels there was still a "residue". Since then he's gained a family of his own for the first time and has finally been able to move on. "And this time when we started again I found I really liked the chemistry of the band without the baggage we carried around for so long. We can acknowledge what happened. But we are different people."

Talking to Mick Fleetwood at the rehearsal studio where the band are preparing for their forthcoming tour, the drummer agrees. But he also says that the unique chemistry that created *Rumours* has not entirely dissipated. "There's an incredible amount of emotional investment within this band, outside of the music," he explains. "The vibration of what happened is still alive. It's not theatre – it's real." He stretches his long frame across a couch, still the elegant English dandy.

"Christine has gone, but Stevie is surrounded by three men, two of whom she's had relationships with. This still makes for interesting copy. My friendship and absolute love for Stevie is still able to exist. She's my wife's best friend and we've all just come back from a vacation in Hawaii together. It's not corporate. It's still a powerful thing emotionally. There are areas for Stevie and Lindsey that are still sticky for them. But we've found a road map where this can happen."

Talking to Nicks, who seems animated and incredibly open, the Fleetwood Mac story is not so much soap opera as gothic romance. Either way, it's a tale in which she believed the final chapter had been written with the band's 1997 reunion tour and the subsequent departure of Christine McVie. *"Not all the king's horses and all the king's men could put it back together,"* she sang on "Fall From Grace", from her 2001 solo album, *Trouble In Shangri-La*.

"Yes, that was totally about the band," she admits now.

Yet she had no hesitation in signing on again when approached. "It's like the restless spirit of Fleetwood Mac still needs to find peace," she says. "That sounds a bit *Wuthering Heights*, but in a way it is. I don't think any of us could be in any other band."

Say You Will features 18 tracks, nine written by Nicks and nine by Buckingham, who also produced (with assistance on some tracks from Rob Cavallo). "It's really like a Buckingham-Nicks record with this power trio backing," says Nicks. She says she misses Christine McVie, who she hasn't seen in five years. The day after the Grammy awards in January 1998 (where Fleetwood Mac had three nominations but went away empty-handed), McVie packed up, sold her house and car and left for Britain. "I'm not ungrateful to Hollywood but I've lived there for 28 years and I'm homesick," she told this writer shortly before the move. "I want to spend more time with my English family and open a restaurant." She hasn't been back to LA since.

"Chris did not enjoy the experience of being back on the road at all," Nicks says. "And I can understand why she left. She's now 59, and I'm now the same age she was on that last 1997 tour. It's very hard on a woman to do this. But with her in the band we had a feminine power, and I wished she'd stayed."

At 54, and without make-up, it is still easy to understand what made Nicks one of the most desirable women on the planet when she twisted and twirled her way through "Rhiannon" in her trademark black lace and chiffon. Today, though, she's damaged her hip and mounts the studio steps gingerly.

"You become more brittle as you get old. But it's all a state of mind – I'm trying to have a young attitude. There's still nobody can dance like me," she says.

Several of her nine songs on *Say You Will* are equally venerable. In 2001, when she was about to go on tour with her last solo album, she handed over a collection of 17 demos to Buckingham, Fleetwood and John McVie. "I went back through my vaults of tunes and picked all the ones I really liked but which for one reason or another had never seen the light of day," she recounts.

Her colleagues picked five of them for the new album, including "Goodbye Baby" and "Smile At You", written in 1975-76 and which "could easily have ended up on *Rumours*", according to Nicks.

While she was away on tour, the "power trio" of Fleetwood, John McVie and Buckingham rented a house in Bel Air, installed Buckingham's home studio and worked on the songs. "When I came

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

All together again, for a while, circa 1982

back off tour I was happy with what they'd done. But I listened and I said, 'This isn't going to be good unless we have some new material.'"

In December 2001 she went back home for Christmas to the house she has kept in Phoenix for more than 20 years. A month later, she returned to LA with four new songs. "I was totally nervous," she recalls. "I knew they wouldn't like the songs. Your self-esteem plummets and you feel you're the worst songwriter in the world. But I played them and they flipped out."

One of them, "Illume", was inspired by 9/11, after Nicks had flown into New York the night before and found herself stranded in the city.

"Lindsey had tears in his eyes," she recalls. "He put his hand on my knee and he said, 'How do you do this?'"

In the absence of Christine McVie's sisterly support, Nicks recruited bosom friend Sheryl Crow to guest on two of the new songs, "Silver Girl" and the title track.

"I penned 'Silver Girl' about Sheryl," she says. "It's an ode to a lady rock star who's always on the road and has a very hard time having relationships and settling down. So it's also totally about me."

Although she admits she couldn't give up the lifestyle the band has afforded her, Nicks can't conceal a certain anger based on her conviction that being in Fleetwood Mac has forced her to make huge sacrifices in other areas of her life.

"Being a female rock star is great and it's fabulous and you make lots of money. But it makes it very hard to do anything else. As a woman you give up part of yourself to be in a band," she laments. It's not so much self-pity. Simply a statement of fact. "Every relationship I've ever had, great or small, and whether I was going out with a rock star or a lawyer, has been destroyed by this business."

Yet, in many ways, *Say You Will* is primarily Lindsey Buckingham's album.

"The focus was led completely by Lindsey," Fleetwood confirms. "Even on Stevie's songs, because she was out on tour, she handed the reins to Lindsey, which was a very trusting thing. None of this would have happened without him."

Most of Buckingham's nine compositions were originally destined for a solo album he began recording in the mid '90s. "Then we met at Christine's house six years ago and everybody intervened and said to me, 'You've got to stop your solo album and help get the band together and do this tour.'"

Having been "guilted", as he puts it, into the 1997 reunion, his intention was to return to his solo record. "But Mick was playing on my solo stuff. John was playing bass on it. Even Christine was on it on a limited basis. So to all intents and purposes it was Fleetwood Mac doing a Lindsey Buckingham album. Nobody said, 'We've got to make this a Fleetwood Mac LP.' It just grew into that. In the end, all we had to do with my material was for Stevie to add her vocals and it was a Fleetwood Mac record."

Fleetwood confirms that, when he began recording with Buckingham again, it was not his agenda to get the band back together. "I thought I was going to spend three weeks doing overdubs on Lindsey's album. My whole thing is Fleetwood Mac forever. But I prefaced my renewed relationship with Lindsey by saying, 'You know I want Fleetwood Mac back together. But I don't want you thinking that's why I'm here.' But it went so well that it was Lindsey who said that maybe we could turn this into a Fleetwood Mac record."

Even without Christine McVie's songwriting, between them Buckingham and Nicks had so many songs that, at one point, *Say You Will* was going to be a double album. "I thought it would be an intriguing thing for a band to return with something that had such ambition. We even got into sequencing it as a double," Buckingham says.

"Eventually we pulled back on that for issues of pricing and so on. But we kept the core and from my point of view it's the best work we've ever done, in terms of the execution and sophistication. Which I guess is appropriate for a bunch of people who are all in their fifties now."

The 1997 tour and accompanying live album, *The Dance*, were "as good a job as we could do in going out and restating our body of work," says Buckingham. "But for me, this is the beginning of a whole other thing because it's new songs."

With Nicks out on her solo tour, Buckingham particularly enjoyed working in an all-male environment. "There was a lot of bonding between the three of us and it was a good place to start building a reconfigured dynamic between us. It was very difficult for me for years to have to work with Stevie when I didn't want to be around her. And it was always hard for John to rise to his higher self around Christine. There was never a sense that we were in any way crippled without Chris because we've made a record that's at least as potent."

Nicks, meanwhile, seems genuinely pleased that Buckingham's restless spirit appears finally to have found musical and personal satisfaction.

"Hopefully this record will give him back a sense of purpose and delight. He's in a way better space now and it's wonderful for me to see that. I care about him and his life and what he does and if he's happy. I want him to be OK. This record is his baby and I really think he's gone and done that great thing he always wanted to do."

Making *Rumours*

> "BEING A FEMALE ROCK STAR IS GREAT, BUT IT MAKES IT HARD TO DO ANYTHING ELSE"
> STEVIE NICKS

WHEN MICK FLEETWOOD rang Lindsey Buckingham on New Year's Eve, 1974, and invited him to join Fleetwood Mac, the move seemed born of desperation.

Recently relocated to LA, the band's star had waned since the glory days of Peter Green, and when guitarist, singer and composer Bob Welch abruptly left what was the group's ninth line-up in eight years, the future looked bleak indeed – particularly as *Heroes Are Hard To Find*, the band's final album with Welch, had barely sold enough copies "to pay Warner Brothers' electric light bill", as Fleetwood puts it.

Across town, prospects for the Buckingham-Nicks duo looked equally unpromising. Born into a wealthy San Francisco family in October 1947, the young Lindsey Buckingham fell under the influence of Elvis Presley's guitarist Scotty Moore and folk groups such as The Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul And Mary. He taught himself guitar (he still doesn't read music) and by 1968 found himself playing bass in a local Bay Area band called Fritz.

Buckingham in turn recommended a young singer called Stevie Nicks to the band. Although she'd grown up in Phoenix, Arizona, Nicks (born in May 1948) had first met Buckingham when she transferred to high school in San Francisco in 1966. Their 'dream team' introduction appeared to make their subsequent relationship inevitable. Buckingham had been playing "California Dreaming" at a party and Nicks simply started singing with him. Two years later, when Fritz needed a singer, Stevie was the first person he called.

Although they opened for Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, a record deal failed to materialise, and it eventually became obvious they were going nowhere fast. By 1971, Fritz had split, and Buckingham and Nicks – by now lovers as well as musical soulmates – moved to LA. A record deal with Polydor resulted in the 1973 album *Buckingham Nicks*. But with no real marketing or promotion, it died a death. Nicks was reduced to waitressing at Clementine's, a Beverly Hills singles bar, for $1.50 an hour, while Buckingham did a few sessions and lived on her money.

"I believed that Lindsey shouldn't have to work, that he should just lay on the floor and practise his guitar and become more brilliant every day," Nicks explains. "And as I watched him become more brilliant every day, I felt very gratified. I was totally devoted to making it happen for him. And when you really feel that way about somebody, it's very easy to take your own personality and quiet it way down."

But by late 1974, Nicks was "within weeks" of returning to her parents' home in Phoenix, and contemplating a return to college.

"If we hadn't joined Fleetwood Mac, would Lindsey and I have carried on and made it?" she asks today. "I was really tired of having no

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS

money and being a waitress. It's very possible that I would have gone back to school and Lindsey would have gone back to San Francisco."

Mick Fleetwood, meanwhile, was searching for a new guitarist to replace the departed Welch, when he ran across Buckingham-Nicks at Sound City Studios. He was impressed by the song "Frozen Love" from their Polydor album. But Fleetwood Mac already had a female singer in Christine McVie, so his initial invitation was merely to the guitarist.

"He was standing there grooving to this searing guitar solo, and he needed a guitar player. That was as far as his thinking went. I had to explain we came as a duo. Stupid me, eh?" Buckingham jokes today.

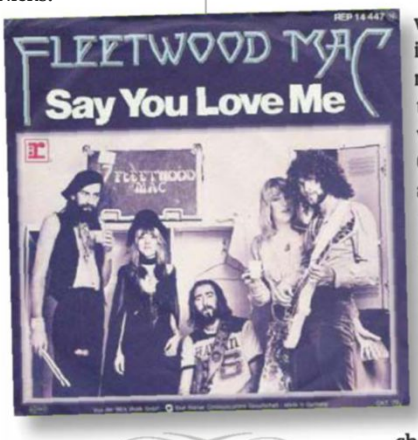
Fleetwood was so convinced that Buckingham was his man that he swiftly agreed to take them both – although he promised Christine McVie that she had a veto if she disliked Nicks.

Initially, Buckingham had reservations about submerging his musical personality in an already established band – particularly as he had not been a fan of the Bob Welch-era Fleetwood Mac. Nicks swiftly reassured him.

"I said, 'We can always quit. They're going to pay us $200 each a week, so we can save some money and leave in six months with a little nest-egg if it doesn't work,' " she recalls today.

The 'audition' took place over dinner in a Mexican restaurant in LA. Christine McVie immediately took to the new girl, declaring Nicks to be "a bright, very humorous, very direct, tough little thing".

The 10th, and most enduring, of Fleetwood Mac's multiple lineups was in place. But it was not necessarily the most stable.



"THE THING WE HAD IN COMMON WAS A SENSE OF HUMOUR THROUGH ALL THE PAIN"
CHRISTINE McVIE

WHAT BUCKINGHAM AND NICKS had failed to reveal to their new colleagues was that, although they came as a team, their relationship was already falling apart at the seams. "Lindsey and I were in total chaos a year before we met Fleetwood Mac," Nicks tells *Uncut* almost 30 years on. "I had already moved out of our apartment a couple of times and then had to move back in because I couldn't afford it. Our relationship was already in dire straits. But if we'd broken up within the first six months of Fleetwood Mac, there would have been no record and we would have been in big trouble, so when we joined the band we took the decision to hang in there."

Within three weeks of the Mexican restaurant meeting, Fleetwood Mac were in Sound City Studios in LA. The Buckingham-Nicks teaming brought a pile of songs with them and the difference they made to the sound was immediately evident.

Best of all was Nicks' "Rhiannon", a dreamy, bewitching song with an insistent guitar motif from Buckingham that swiftly came to define the new Fleetwood Mac. Not far behind were Nicks' "Crystal" and "Landslide", rescued and reworked from the duo's Polydor album. Buckingham contributed "Monday Morning" and "I'm So Afraid", while they collaborated on "World Turning".

Christine McVie also appeared inspired by the arrival of the newcomers, and contributed two of her most enduring compositions in "Say You Love Me" and "Over My Head", as well as "Warm Ways" and "Sugar Daddy".

The album was finished inside three months – astonishingly fast considering the years the band would spend labouring over their future releases. Upon completion, the band repaired to Hawaii for a vacation.

When *Fleetwood Mac* was released in July 1975, its success was initially modest. But the band toured relentlessly. "There were no limousines and Christine slept on top of the amps in the back of the truck," Nicks recalls. "We just played everywhere and we sold that record. We kicked that album in the ass."

In September 1976, 15 months after its release, the album topped the US charts, having also produced three hit singles in "Over My Head", "Rhiannon" and "Say You Love Me".

By then, Fleetwood Mac had already been back at work for six months, recording the follow-up at the Record Plant in Sausalito, a half-hour drive over the Golden Gate Bridge from downtown San Francisco.

But during the relentless touring of the previous year, the deep cracks in the Buckingham-Nicks relationship had grown to a volcanic fissure, and the McVies were now also in the middle of divorce proceedings.

The ever-affable and gregarious Fleetwood attempted to hold the ring, adding the roles of guidance counsellor and social worker to that of band leader. "Everybody was pretty weirded out," Christine McVie told Cameron Crowe in a landmark 1977 *Rolling Stone* cover story. "But somehow Mick was there, the figurehead – 'We must carry on, let's be mature about this, sort it out.'"

It was a typically brave attitude, for the drummer had problems of his own, with his marriage to Jenny Boyd disintegrating.

"By the time we got to *Rumours*, the emotional rollercoaster was in full motion and we were all in a ditch. Everybody knew everything about everybody and I was definitely piggy-in-the-middle," Fleetwood recalls today. "But meanwhile my best friend was also having an affair with my wife and it was all weird and twisted. It was a total mess and that's how we made the album."

Fleetwood concedes that he had just one consolation denied to the other couples. "At least I was spared the in-house, up-front situation. I didn't have to actually work with my ex-spouse."

While it was left to Fleetwood to console a very unhappy John McVie, Christine and Stevie, who might so easily have been rivals, developed a mutual support society.

"We're totally different, at complete opposite ends of the personality spectrum," Christine McVie told me in Detroit during the 1997 reunion tour. "The one thing we had in common, which bound us together, was a sense of humour through all the pain."

Later on, neither was short of female company as hairdressers, wardrobe mistresses and make-up artists were added to the extravagant Fleetwood Mac touring circus. But initially they were two women alone in a man's world.

"We didn't have anybody else," Nicks says. "We had to end up being close because otherwise it was just hang out with the guys all the time. And because there was this chaos going on with me and Lindsey, the band gave me a friend in this woman and I could hang out with Christine."

When the band had first arrived in San Francisco at the beginning of the year-long process that was the recording of *Rumours*, the Record Plant provided a house for their living accommodation. Nicks and Christine McVie spent only one night under the same roof as the male members. "That house was like the riot house," Nicks tells *Uncut*. "There were girls everywhere and everybody was completely drunk the whole time. Me and Chris decided we couldn't be there. The next day we moved out and got two matching apartments next to each other."

Some nights after they had left the studio, a stoned John McVie would come looking for Christine. "He'd be walking up and down the corridor, very upset, screaming her name, and she'd be hiding in my room," Nicks recalls. The inside sleeve of *Rumours* shows Stevie and Christine embracing while the fatherly Fleetwood looks on.

Christine Perfect and John McVie first met at a Fleetwood Mac gig one night in early 1968. At the time, she admits she was more interested in Peter Green. "But John asked me if I wanted a drink and we sat down and had a few laughs before they went onstage. Then, after the concert, he came over and said, 'Shall I take you out to dinner some time?' I went, 'Whoa, I thought you were engaged or something.' He said, 'Nah, it's all over.' I thought he was devastatingly attractive but it never occurred to me to look at him."

They went out for a short time, before John disappeared off on Fleetwood Mac's first US tour. "By this time I was really crazy about him," Christine recalls. "But I didn't really know what was happening with him."

She, in turn, went off to Germany with Birmingham blues band Chicken Shack, for whom she was keyboardist/vocalist, and had a fling with "a crazy German DJ" who asked her to marry him. She turned him down and instead wrote John a long letter explaining her feelings for him.

When Fleetwood Mac returned from America, McVie proposed. They were married 10 days later

Live at the Oakland Coliseum, 1977

and Christine announced in *Melody Maker* that she was retiring to become a housewife. She soon tired of washing the dishes though and, a few months later, in August 1970, she decided to join her old man in Fleetwood Mac following Peter Green's departure.

"We were very happy for three years and then the strain of me being in the same band started to take its toll," she says. "When you're in the same band as somebody, you're seeing them 24 hours a day and you start to see an awful lot of the bad side. There's a lot of drinking and John is not the most pleasant of people when he's drunk. Very belligerent. I was seeing more Hyde than Jekyll."

Christine had already embarked on an affair with the band's sound engineer, Martin Birch, in 1973. At the same time, the band's guitarist, Bob Weston, was having an affair with Fleetwood's wife Jenny. This complex web of relationships almost split the band, before Weston was sacked and the McVies agreed to give it another chance. But this merely delayed the inevitable, and Christine and John broke up for good in the middle of the band's 1975 US tour.

"I was aware of it being irresponsible," Christine told Cameron Crowe two years later. "But I had to do it for my sanity. It was either that or me ending up in a lunatic asylum. I still worry for him, more than I would ever dare tell him. I still have a lot of love for John. Let's face it, as far as I'm concerned, it was him that stopped me loving him.

"He constantly tested what limits of endurance I would go to. He just went one step too far. If he knew that I cared and worried so much about him, I think he'd play on it."

John McVie later wondered if their problems might not have happened if his wife hadn't joined the band. But by the time they went into the studio to record *Rumours*, they weren't speaking to each other.

"We literally didn't talk, other than to say, 'What key is this song in?'" Christine recalled. "We were as cold as ice to each other because John found it easier that way."

A devastated John McVie began drinking and drugging more and more heavily.

"There's no doubt about the fact that he hasn't really been a happy man since I left him," Christine said in 1977. "Sure, I could make him happy tomorrow and say, 'Yeah, John, I'll come back to you.' Then I would be miserable. I'm not that unselfish."

EVEN 20 YEARS LATER, McVie still appeared to be carrying a torch for her. One night during the 1997 tour we all got drunk together in the hotel bar after a gig and he decided to address the entire room on the subject.

"She's a lovely, lovely lady, my ex-wife, even though she told me to fuck off," he bellowed at bemused fellow guests before he struggled to his feet and knocked over an entire table of drinks.

When sober, he is more philosophical. "You've got the pressure of being on the road and living with each other and seeing each other at their worst," he told me the morning after the night before. "Chris saw me at my worst one time too many. I drink too much and when I've drunk too much, a personality comes out. It's not very pleasant to be around. And bless her heart, Chris said, 'I don't want to be around this person.' It was awful. You're told by someone you adore and love that they don't want you in their life any more."

> "SHE'S A LOVELY, LOVELY LADY, MY EX-WIFE, EVEN THOUGH SHE TOLD ME TO FUCK OFF"
> JOHN McVIE

To make matters worse for John McVie, his wife had taken up with the band's lighting director, Curry Grant, whose presence around the band caused intense friction. "Wherever John was, he couldn't be," recalls Christine. "There were some very delicate moments."

John, meanwhile, took what comfort he could from the groupies back at the band house provided by the Record Plant, and described by Fleetwood as "like a bordello with blacked-out rooms, thick shag carpets, deprivation tanks and a very liberal sprinkling of assorted drugs."

Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks were at least talking – or, rather, ranting and raving at each other. At one point, Buckingham thought seriously about quitting.

"In the middle of it all, one day Lindsey said, 'I don't know whether I can handle this.' He was not a happy camper," recalls Mick Fleetwood. "I gave him a pep talk, saying, 'This whole thing is a compromise. That's what a band is about. But if it's an unhealthy one for you, then you don't have to be here.' From then on he was really focused on making the record."

For Nicks, there were no second thoughts. "Really, each one of us was too proud and way too stubborn to walk away from it," she recalls. "I wasn't going to leave. Lindsey wasn't going to leave. What would we have done – sat around in LA and tried to start new bands? It was just 'grit your teeth and bear it.'"

There were also problems between Buckingham and John McVie, the two jilted partners who found no comfort in each other's company, as their womenfolk had done.

RICHARD MCCAFFREY/ MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/ GETTY IMAGES

On the Mirage Tour in May 1983

"I came in as the new kid on the block, but I was also the kid with the ideas so John and I used to butt heads quite a bit," Buckingham recalls. "It took me a long time to appreciate his approach."

On one occasion, McVie hurled a glass of vodka in the guitarist's face. "About the only people in the band who haven't had an affair are me and Lindsey," he later grimly joked.

Instead of quitting, Nicks, Buckingham and Christine McVie began writing songs to each other, like pages from their respective diaries. You had to feel rather sorry for John. As Mick Fleetwood observes, "They were all talking to each other in songs and, because he doesn't sing, he couldn't talk back."

For Nicks, Buckingham wrote the album's opener, "Second Hand News" ("*One thing I think you should know/I ain't gonna miss you when you go*"). Nicks responded immediately with "Dreams" ("*Now here you go again/ You say you want your freedom*").

Then Buckingham takes up the conversation again. First in "Never Going Back Again" ("*Been down one time, been down two times, I'm never going back again*"). Then even more forcefully in "Go Your Own Way" ("*Loving you isn't the right thing to do*"), before Nicks responds once more with "I Don't Want To Know" ("*I don't want to stand between you and love, honey, I just want you to feel fine*").

For John McVie, Christine penned "Don't Stop", a warm-hearted but still painful message to him that he would one day begin to feel better. However, he must have been less than thrilled to play bass on "You Make Loving Fun", written by his estranged wife for the new man in her life, Curry Grant. She wrote "Oh Daddy" for Mick Fleetwood, separated from Jenny Boyd, the mother of his two children. "The Chain", credited to the entire band, was apparently about all of them and the tangled web they had woven.

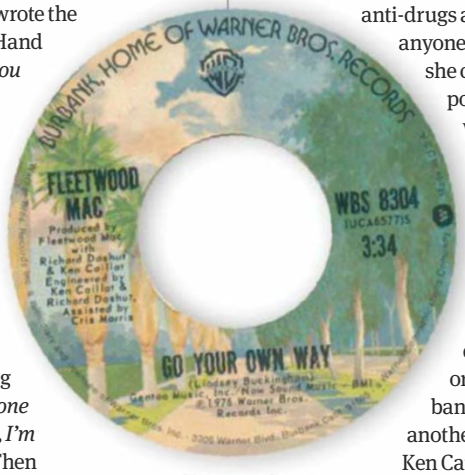
The album closes prophetically with Nicks' cocaine anthem, "Gold Dust Woman". "At that time, everybody around me was doing it," she says. "Lindsey and I wonder if we hadn't moved to LA would we ever have got into drugs? Drug-taking was methodical when we got to LA. It was, 'Here, try this.' Everybody was so willing to give you stuff and tell you you'd like it. 'Gold Dust Woman' was about how we all love the ritual of it, the little bottle, the diamond-studded spoons, the fabulous velvet bags. For me, it fitted right into the incense and candles and that stuff. And I really imagined that it could overtake everything, never thinking in a million years that it would overtake me."

According to Buckingham, the drugs went with the territory. "It was anything goes and if you were making records you had to function on a certain level and we all did our share. It was music through chemistry."

And although the drugs may have slowed down the process of recording, they played their part in heightening the band's creativity.

"We weren't just singing to each other but screaming and everything was enlarged by the intake of illegal substances," Christine McVie admitted to me over a bottle of red wine in her hotel suite one night during the 1997 reunion tour.

Nicks – although she is today militantly anti-drugs and threatens to shop anyone around the band whom she catches – concedes the point: "We were in the worst shape. But it was helping us make the best music."



"*RUMOURS* IS SO BRIGHT AND SUNNY, BUT UNDERNEATH IT'S SO DARK AND MURKY"
LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

Throughout the *Rumours* sessions, a black velvet bag of cocaine held pride of place under the mixing desk. Every so often, one or other member of the band would demand another hit. One day, engineer Ken Caillat substituted a dummy bag full of talcum powder. When it was next called for, he tipped the bag upside down and emptied the contents all over the floor. McVie and Fleetwood were about to kill him when the laughter of producer Richard Dashut, seated next to Caillat, made them realise they'd been hoaxed.

But such lighter moments were few and far between. It took a year to make the album – "the most intense year of my life", Lindsey Buckingham would later claim. "Trauma," said Christine McVie. "Trau-ma."

Yet even when they thought they'd finished, the drama wasn't over. Having spent a year making the album, the master tapes had been dragged across the machine heads a thousand times. In those pre-digital days, this had led to a marked degradation of the sound quality, particularly at the upper end of the register, and the band had to go back into the studio in LA to redub.

Initially, the group appeared oblivious to the power of what they had created. Buckingham wasn't convinced that they had a hit on their hands at all.

"I was worried that Side 2 had no continuity," he says. "I thought we'd done the best we could but the album was trailing off and lacked that extra song we needed. I really wasn't aware of the compelling drama it had and I remember certain people being very negative about *Rumours*. We're all so insecure and I really didn't know."

Christine McVie, at least in part, concurred in 1997 when she told this writer: "It was John who suggested the title, *Rumours*, because we were all writing journals and diaries about each other," she says. "But we didn't quite realise that until all the songs were strung together. Then we knew we had something pretty powerful, to a point that transcended everybody's misery and depression. I think we knew that if we'd all been getting on like a house on fire, the songs wouldn't have been nearly as good."

INDEED. Has melodic MOR soft-rock ever surged with such emotional discharge and human electricity? Has such a highly polished veneer ever been so dramatically juxtaposed with such a scalding cauldron of simmering tensions and seething passions? Buckingham recalls them all sitting in the same booth, harmonising on each other's songs and looking into each other's eyes with emotions raging uncontrollably.

"You can look at *Rumours* and say, 'Well, the album is bright and it's clean and it's sunny,'" Buckingham says. "But everything underneath is so dark and murky. What was going on between us created a resonance that goes beyond the music itself. You had these dialogues shooting back and forth about what was going down between us and we were chronicling every nuance of it. We had to play the hand out and people found it riveting. It wasn't a press creation. It was all true and we couldn't suppress it. The built-in drama cannot be underplayed as a springboard to that album's success."

Nicks puts it even more succinctly. "If you took out all the bad stuff in the band, the songs wouldn't have happened. There simply wouldn't have been a *Rumours* if everything had been fabulous."

But if it seems miraculous that they managed to stay intact and functioning during the recording of the album, once *Rumours* started flying, the group found itself bound together by a force far stronger than any emotional dysfunction: commerce.

"The band was at the pinnacle of its career and we had a responsibility not to break that up for anything as trivial as a divorce," as Christine was later to joke.

Released in February 1977, *Rumours* topped the US album charts for six months. It was punk's 'year zero', but that didn't prevent *Rumours* topping the charts in Britain, where it remained in the Top 100 for the next eight years. The record sold 10 million in its first year and at its height in America was going platinum (one million sales) every 30 days.

Rumours also produced four US Top 10 singles in "Dreams", "You Make Loving Fun", "Go Your Own

RICHARD MCCAFFREY/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

With Billy Burnette *(far left)* and Rick Vito, who toured *Tango In The Night* but didn't play on the album

Way" and "Don't Stop", and the album went on to sell 25 million copies.

Upon its release, Fleetwood Mac embarked on an eight-month US tour that became a debauched, cocaine-and-champagne-fuelled odyssey across the continent, which cemented the band's legendary reputation for excess. And the heady cocktail of success, drugs and more money than they knew how to spend left little space for reflection or time to slow down.

Christine McVie bought Anthony Newley's old mansion in Coldwater Canyon and promptly installed her own English pub and a sculpture studio (in her youth she had briefly attended Birmingham Art College). Outside were parked a pair of matching Mercedes-Benz cars with licence plates reflecting the names of her two Lhasa Apso dogs. She also dumped lighting director Curry Grant for Beach Boy Dennis Wilson, who she said "awakened things in me I'd been scared to experience and made me feel the extremes of every emotion".

Fleetwood bought a cliff-top house in Malibu and a fleet of vintage sports cars. Buckingham, who seemed the least impressed by the trappings of celebrity, bought a fine LA home which he shared with Dashut, while John McVie divided his time between a 41-foot schooner moored at Marina del Rey and a home in Beverly Hills.

Nicks purchased a large mock-Tudor home above Sunset Boulevard, referred to as "Fantasy Land", and a home in Phoenix, which is still her base. None of the band was reticent about flashing their cash. But she bought into the rich-and-famous lifestyle more enthusiastically than anyone, having been taught to spend money, she claims, during her affair with the notoriously ostentatious Don Henley.

"He was responsible and I blame him every day. The Eagles had it down," she tells *Uncut*. "They had the Lear jets and the presidential suites long before we did, so I learnt from the best. And once you learn to live like that, there's no going back. It's like, 'Get me a Lear jet. I need to go to LA. I don't care if it costs $15,000. I need to go now.'"

Nicks also embarked on a relationship with Mick Fleetwood that further jeopardised the band's already fragile stability. "Never in a million years could you have told me that would happen. That was the biggest surprise. But Mick is definitely one of my great, great loves," she was still saying years later. "But that really wasn't good for anybody. Everybody was angry, because Mick was married to a wonderful girl and had two wonderful children. I was horrified. I loved these people. I loved his family. So it couldn't possibly work out. And it didn't. It just couldn't."

In an even more bizarre relationship, on January 29, 1983, Nicks married Kim Anderson, the widower of a school friend, Robyn (the subject of her song "Gypsy"), who suffered from leukaemia, and who died three days after giving birth by caesarean section to a baby boy called Matthew. Within five months, Nicks had become stepmother to the child by marrying his father.

The rest of the band were appalled, and Christine McVie admits she even refused to buy the couple a wedding present. Their misgivings were well-directed. Within eight months the couple were divorced.

Touring for Fleetwood Mac by now meant private jets and all manner of preposterous demands. Hotels would be told to paint rooms pink and install grand pianos. White, like the one from "Imagine", of course. If they couldn't be manoeuvred through the door, they had to be winched through the windows.

SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDST of the madness, the group managed to record further albums. Following *Rumours* was never going to be easy and the double album *Tusk*, released in November 1979, met with distinctly mixed reactions. Again it took over a year to record and cost a million dollars – an unprecedented amount of money. The album boldly mixed radio-friendly pop songs from Nicks and Christine McVie with more experimental and non-commercial pieces from Buckingham, who dominated the sessions and was adamant the band should show more ambition than merely recording 'Rumours Part II'.

"Coming off an album as successful as that, we were being asked to get on this treadmill of clichéd thought and hash out the same thing again," recalls Buckingham. "Punk and new wave had kicked in during the meantime and, although I wasn't directly influenced by that music, it gave me a kick in the pants in terms of having the courage to try to shake things up a little bit. I wanted something that had a little more depth."

Many of the 20 tracks on the album were prepared by Buckingham, working alone at home. "That got me to more esoteric places than I could go in a group situation. Then I'd take the songs back to the studio, and having the band build on it was the basic premise for much of *Tusk*," he recalls.

The title track employed a 112-piece marching band. And the excess was equally gargantuan on a non-musical level. "Recording *Tusk* was quite absurd," Christine McVie later said. "The

BARRY PLUMMER

Nicks' life just got more turbulent after *Rumours*

Nicks and (below) Buckingham in Burbank during the 1997 reunion tour

studio contract rider for refreshments was like a telephone directory. Exotic food delivered to the studio, crates of champagne. And it had to be the best, with no thought of what it cost. Stupid. Really stupid. Somebody once said that with the money we spent on champagne on one night, they could have made an entire album. And it's probably true."

Tusk failed to replicate the numbers *Rumours* had sold and although it rose to No 2 in Britain, it only made No 18 in the far more lucrative US market. It went on to sell eight million copies; impressive for a double album, but a relative failure in comparison to 25 million.

Other band members were not slow to point the finger at Buckingham. "The rest of the band had a cynical view towards the way *Tusk* was made and the reasons why I thought it was important to move into new territory," the guitarist recalls. "It wasn't just negativity. There was open hostility. Then I got a certain amount of flak because it didn't sell as many as *Rumours*. Mick would say to me, 'Well, you went too far, you blew it.' That hurt. And so it's gratifying now to hear Mick tell anyone who asks that it's his favourite Fleetwood Mac album."

Indeed, the drummer had expressed this very opinion to me just an hour earlier, although he also added that he still feels it would have been better "condensed" into a single disc.

The initially disappointing sales of *Tusk* were boosted by a mammoth 113-date world tour, on which every date was recorded for a live album. Meant to be a 'cheap' option after the million dollars blown on *Tusk*, with typical excess, *Live*, released in November 1980, was eventually assembled from taping over 400 shows.

When a battle-weary Fleetwood Mac ended the Tusk tour at the Hollywood Bowl in late 1980, they were physically and mentally drained and barely able to stand the sight of each other.

"I used to go onstage and drink a bottle of Dom Perignon, and drink one off stage afterwards," Christine McVie later recalled. "It's not the kind of party I'd like to go to now. There was a lot of booze being drunk and there was blood floating around in the alcohol, which doesn't make for a stable environment."

The band was put on hold as members recharged their depleted batteries. Nicks, Buckingham and Fleetwood all made solo albums. But when only the Nicks record was successful, accountants and label executives were soon agitating for another Fleetwood Mac record, and the band reconvened to make *Mirage*. Released in 1982, it was an unsatisfactory album that lacked both the raw emotion of *Rumours* and the runaway ambition which Buckingham had injected into *Tusk*. It sounded like a record made for the sole purpose of sustaining the Fleetwood Mac brand.

"The most disappointing thing to me after *Tusk* was the politics in the band," Buckingham says today. "They said, 'We're not going to do that again.' I felt dead in the water from that. On *Mirage*, I was treading water, saying, 'OK, whatever,' and taking a passive role. For me, none of the albums after *Tusk* quite had it. I think we lost something after that."

Christine McVie has no doubt what it was they had mislaid. "*Mirage* was an attempt to get back into the flow that *Rumours* had. But we missed a vital ingredient. That was the passion," she says bluntly.

It would be five more years before the band would release another album – and, being Fleetwood Mac, there was plenty more trauma in the intervening years. For Mick Fleetwood, these were the beginning of the 'lost' years, which stretched on into the '90s.

"I wasn't quite Keith Moon but I was working hard on getting there," he says today. Along the way he went bankrupt and was relieved of his duties as band manager. Much of his money went up his nose on drugs, although he insists even more was lost on property deals that went wrong.

"It was a wild trip that didn't stop for nine years," he says. "I tried very hard to leave the planet and I nearly did. I don't want to romanticise something that's extremely dangerous. It was fun, but it was a bloody nightmare and I would never do it again. It became boring and sordid."

But the real casualty was the more fragile figure of Nicks, whose cocaine addiction was escalating desperately out of control. Her use had begun as much as a way of coping as a means of getting high. "I'd never felt so tired in my life," she recalls. "When I joined the band, the rock'n'roll life was a shock to my system. It's so intense and so heavy and being in Fleetwood Mac was like being in the army. I was doing a lot of drugs just to get me through to the next thing. I don't remember how much we did. But we spent an awful lot of money on it."

> "BEING IN THE MAC WAS LIKE BEING IN THE ARMY. I WAS DOING A LOT OF DRUGS JUST TO GET THROUGH"
> STEVIE NICKS

Although the coke worked for a while, there was a high price to pay. "We never stopped, never took vacations. And with coke you can stay up way too late. You don't sleep for three days," she recalls today. "But then it backfired. That's what I tell people. And the payback is a bitch. Nobody should go through what I went through. It's not even that good. There was a little bit of fun, but it wasn't fun enough to destroy your life. It creeps me out to talk about it even now."

By 1986, she had hit rock bottom and checked into the Betty Ford Clinic, where Nicks shared a spartan cubicle with an elderly alcoholic woman. Tammy Wynette was a fellow patient.

KEN MURRAY/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE VIA GETTY IMAGES; SAM LEVI/WIREIMAGE

"I knew I was going to die and I didn't want to die. So I was on my way," she tells *Uncut*. "I did my 28 days and I came out and I was brilliant. I was as strong as an ox and I felt great. I could feel myself starting to glow again and I was totally excited about my life. When I walked through those doors at Betty Ford and they searched me and took away all my stuff, it was like, 'OK, I'm never doing that again, because I'm never coming back to a place like this.'"

She was true to her word. "I haven't even seen cocaine since 1986. Nobody would ever take it out in front of me because they know I would call the police," she says.

Yet although she didn't know it at the time, there was worse to come. Nobody around her believed she could stay clean and her friends collectively intervened to persuade her to visit a psychiatrist. Fatefully – and almost fatally – he prescribed a tranquiliser called Klonopin.

Nicks is still angry to this day about what happened. "I agreed to see this psychiatrist to make everybody happy," she says. "But if I had made a wrong turning and got lost and not arrived at that psychiatrist's office that day, the destiny of my life would have been so changed."

Her account of the addiction which ensued is salutary and frightening. "He gave me two little blue pills. One at morning and one at night. Within a couple of months that turned into four little blue pills. Then it became 15 blue pills. He kept increasing my dose. I was in there every two weeks for an hour and he watched me grow heavier and the light went out in my eyes. If I started to run out, I'd start to shake so hard people would stare at me. I thought I had Parkinson's disease. I was sick and high and miserable and overweight. I knew I was going to die."

Finally, one day in the early '90s, she realised she could not go on. "I called up my manager and said, 'Come and get me and take me to a hospital because I'm not going to be alive in two weeks.'"

She spent 47 days in the Daniel Freeman hospital in Marina del Rey, and kicking a prescription tranquiliser proved far more unpleasant than kicking her cocaine habit. "My hair turned grey. My skin peeled off. I couldn't sleep. I had a terrible headache. My body felt like it was burning," she recalls. She shudders as she tells the story.

Nicks survived, but she is understandably bitter. "These psychiatrists and the medical community are the worst drug dealers in the world," she says. "These drugs will make you fat, ruin your life, make you miserable and destroy anything you want to do. And nobody tells you that."

The blow that Klonopin dealt to the Mac was also almost fatal. By the time the band reconvened to record 1987's *Tango In The Night*, Nicks had been addicted to the tranquiliser for a year and was in no fit state to make a record.

With Fleetwood's drug abuse also rendering him largely out of the band, it was left to Lindsey Buckingham to pull the LP together. "We had to rise to the occasion," he recalls today. "It was a difficult record to make. Half the time Mick was falling asleep. We spent a year on the record but we only saw Stevie for a few weeks. I had to pull performances out of words and lines and make parts that sounded like her that weren't her."

Buckingham concedes that Nicks was "the most challenging to deal with", but he excludes nobody from his strictures. "Everyone was at their worst, including myself. We'd made the progression from what could be seen as an acceptable or excusable amount of drug use to a situation where we'd all hit the wall. I think of it as our darkest period."

"Just the fact that we'd survived gave us something in common"

With Nicks managing just two songs and Christine McVie three, Buckingham contributed six compositions and was required, with some reluctance, to give up songs such as "Big Love", "Caroline" and "Family Man", all of which had already been completed for his projected third solo album. If he had not done so, he recognised there simply wouldn't have been an album. "The rest of us were totally devoid of any focus," Fleetwood admits.

Thanks to Buckingham's gargantuan efforts, the result was a more than acceptable return to form, the greatest adversity yet again bringing the best out of Fleetwood Mac. Yet there's no doubt that Buckingham was deeply distressed by the whole experience, and particularly disturbed by the condition of his former girlfriend.

"The way people were conducting their lives made it difficult to get serious work done. Mick was pretty nuts then. We all were. In terms of substance abuse, that was the worst it got," he recalls. "And Stevie was the worst she's ever been. I didn't recognise her. She wasn't the person I had once known."

All of this directly contributed to the showdown in August 1987 when Buckingham walked out of the band, seemingly for good. "When I was done with the record, I said, 'Oh my God. That was the worst recording experience of my life.' And compared to making an album, in my experience, going on the road will multiply the craziness by five. I wasn't up for that. I needed to pull out of the machine and try to maintain a level of integrity for the work that wasn't about the scale or the sales."

TO REPLACE BUCKINGHAM, the band recruited not one but two guitarists in Rick Vito and Billy Burnette. The new six-piece lineup recorded 1990's forgettable *Behind The Mask* before Nicks and McVie also left. Doggedly, the rhythm section of Fleetwood and McVie – who retain legal ownership of the band name – vowed to soldier on. The resulting album, 1995's *Time* – with Bekka Bramlett, daughter of Delaney & Bonnie, and former Traffic man Dave Mason added to the lineup – was even less satisfying.

Yet the flame of the *Rumours* lineup refused to die. After Bill Clinton had adopted "Don't Stop" as his presidential campaign song in 1992, Buckingham, Nicks and Christine McVie all rejoined Fleetwood and John McVie to perform at the new president's inaugural ball. Five years later, on the 20th anniversary of *Rumours*, came a reunion tour and *The Dance*, a live album culled from an MTV special.

Although Christine McVie didn't enjoy the touring rigmarole and announced that she had come to the end of the road, the rest of the band found that time had proved a great healer.

"Just the fact that we'd survived gave us something in common," Buckingham says.

"Looking back, it's like listening to war stories," Mick Fleetwood jokes. "But you have to remember there were people yelling in pain with their legs shot away. There's blood and guts and disagreements still to this day. But that's what makes it mean a shit."

NEAL PRESTON

RELEASE DATE 15 APRIL 2003

SAY YOU WILL

A fragile entente, as the feuding couple return to the fold. "A Buckingham-Nicks record with power trio backing," reckons Stevie.

BY JASON ANDERSON

BY THE TIME of *Say You Will*'s arrival in spring 2003, 16 years had passed since there'd been a Fleetwood Mac studio album featuring new songs by both Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks. For those who'd given up all hope, it must have seemed miraculous for the group's most combative exes to keep the hatchet buried long enough to finish the task at hand. Even so, some listeners may have wished that the sparring partners kept that proverbial hatchet within closer reach, if only to chop the overstuffed result down to a more manageable size.

Running in marathon-like fashion from Buckingham's sprightly, Byrds-like opener "What's the World Coming To?" through to Nicks' closer, "Goodbye Baby", Fleetwood Mac's 17th studio album consists of 18 songs. With a total running time of 75 minutes and 56 seconds, *Say You Will* runs about 90 seconds longer than *Tusk* – not counting the extra 18-or-so minutes on the deluxe edition bonus disc which featured two cuts from an AOL live session, the Nicks original "Not Make Believe" and Buckingham's cover of Dylan's "Love Minus Zero/No Limit". Though a minute-and-a-half may not sound like much in terms of inflation rates, *Say You Will* can feel like it lasts twice as long as the Mac album that had been widely derided as the epitome of musical over-indulgence. Compounding matters is the lack of any songwriting by Christine McVie – this is the first LP to suffer that deficit since *Kiln House* in 1970. She makes a fleeting appearance on two songs (both of which predate the sessions for *Say You Will*), but otherwise stayed out of the fray, having retired from the band a year after the 1997 reunion.

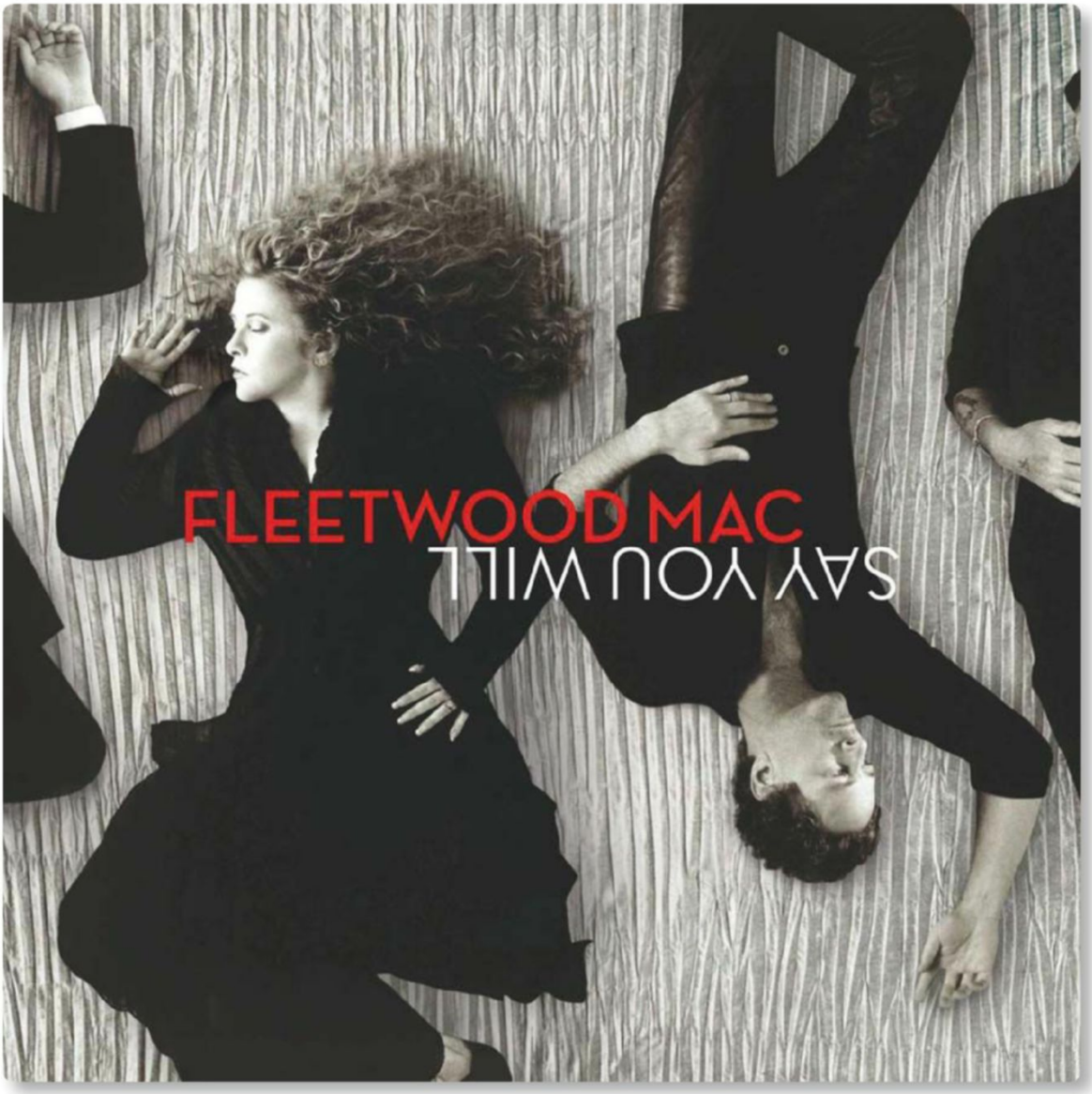
Counterbalancing the grander gestures of Buckingham and Nicks with their customary wistfulness and lightness of touch, McVie's songs had a very valuable leavening effect on Mac albums through the blockbuster years of the '70s and '80s. With her out of the picture, *Say You Will* seesaws between often heavy-going contributions by the band's US contingent, racking up nine songs each when five would have been plenty.

It's telling that the two are facing away from each other while lying supine for *Say You Will*'s cover shoot. They play and sometimes sing on each other's songs here, much as they had for the previous three decades, but it's rare to hear a sense of connection or enthusiasm. Nicks supported the party line around the time of release, but she later described the sessions as tense and unhappy even by Mac standards.

She'd also be right on the money when she compared *Say You Will* to "a Buckingham-Nicks record with power trio backing." If the LP is regarded as what it really is – not an almost-reunion album so much as two solo albums sutured together – it becomes easier to recognise *Say You Will*'s finer qualities and not just feel overwhelmed by the quantity.

And of the two albums released under *Say You Will*'s banner, Buckingham's is the more adventurous – but that's not so surprising. Until being convinced by Warner Brothers and his bandmates to abandon his plans and serve the supposedly greater good, he was planning to feature his songs – which he'd been working on since 1995 – on an album entitled *Gift Of Screws*. (He borrowed the phrase from Emily Dickinson and finally got to use it for another disc in 2008.) Though several tracks here reflect the mellowing effects of his introduction to family life in 1998, others are marked by older, unrulier feelings of ire and indignation. A memorable screed against the inanity of the US media, "Murrow Rolling Over In His Grave" culminates in a 90-second solo that may be the band's most heavy metal moment ever. Buckingham's eager shredding on "Come" is nearly as bombastic, with Fleetwood doing his utmost to maximise the pummelling.

Another display of Buckingham's instrumental dexterity, "Red Rover" is a deft, "Tusk"-like exercise in escalating tension



CRITICS' VERDICT

"It's not like Fleetwood Mac are ABBA – So Uncool They're Cool. But nor have Fleetwood Mac ever been So Cool They're Uncool... if you know what I mean. So what are they and why does a good percentage of their music stand up after decades? I guess because a) witchy woman Stevie Nicks has the voice of a petulant siren; b) studio geek Lindsey Buckingham still wants to be Brian Wilson; and c) Fleetwood Mac were, and are, truly a band for boys and girls. Good things all."

BARNEY HOSKYNS, UNCUT, MAY 2003

while "Say Goodbye" anticipates the stripped-down aesthetic that served him so well on 2011's *Seeds We Sow*. Two midtempo numbers recorded with Christine McVie before the album became a fully fledged Fleetwood Mac project, "Steal Your Heart Away" and "Bleed to Love Her", are pleasant enough, as is the album's first single, "Peacekeeper". But as is typical for him on all the albums after *Rumours*, Buckingham sounds most engaged when he's trying to escape the band's fan-pleasing conventions.

By contrast, that comfort zone brings the best out of Nicks. A vintage slice of folk-rock polished to the kind of sheen only possible in California, the title track would seem irrepressibly young at heart even if it didn't feature the cheery voices of actual adolescents like Stevie's niece and John McVie's daughter. Another of that track's cast of guests, Nicks' friend Sheryl Crow serves as both helpmate and inspiration for "Silver Girl", a "Rhiannon"-like ode to *"a golden girl immersed in a hardcore world"* and *"a wild adventurer"*. Like a rhythmically tumultuous variation on "Sara", "Illume (9-11)" was one of several songs Nicks wrote after the World Trade Center attacks – she rejected the others as "too depressing", preferring this one's opaque imagery. But elsewhere on the LP, the formula doesn't serve Nicks or the band so well. "Smile at You" and "Everybody Finds Out" stray toward the forgettable.

At such moments, *Say You Will* suffers from the impression that Buckingham and Nicks have little interest in serving each other's needs or accentuating each other's strengths. "Miranda" is just one example of a Buckingham song that needs more Stevie and less guitar. For their part, the rhythm section just seem to be delighted to be challenged by strong new material, a rarity in the non-Buckingham '90s years.

"Thrown Down", a musically breezy, lyrically steely Nicks contribution that may be *Say You Will*'s closest thing to a genuine group effort, offers a chance to hear the voices of Buckingham and Nicks intertwine much as they did in times that were coloured by a comparable level of acrimony, but bore none of this album's prevailing note of mutual indifference. Fittingly, Nicks' lyrics portray lovers reconciling once again in spite of their better judgement. As she sings with her old sparring partner, *"Maybe now he could prove to her/That he could be good for her/And they should be together."* Regardless of the state of Buckingham and Nicks' own neverending romantic melodrama, their duet proves just how much they still belong in each other's songs.

TRACKMARKS SAY YOU WILL

1. What's The World Coming To? ★★★
2. Murrow Turning Over In His Grave ★★★
3. Illume (9-11) ★★★
4. Thrown Down ★★★★★
5. Miranda ★★
6. Red Rover ★★★★★
7. Say You Will ★★★★
8. Peacekeeper ★★★
9. Come ★★★
10. Smile At You ★★★
11. Running Through The Garden ★★★
12. Silver Girl ★★★
13. Steal Your Heart Away ★★★
14. Bleed To Love Her ★★★
15. Everybody Finds Out ★★★
16. Destiny Rules ★★★
17. Say Goodbye ★★★★
18. Goodbye Baby ★★★★

Label: Reprise
Produced: Lindsey Buckingham, Rob Cavallo, John Shanks
Recorded: Bellagio House, Ocean Way, Lindsey's garage, Cornerstone Studios, LA
Personnel: Lindsey Buckingham (guitar, percussion, keyboards, vocals), Stevie Nicks (keyboards, vocals), John McVie (bass, black keys), Mick Fleetwood (drums, percussion), Christine McVie (keyboards, backing vocals), Sheryl Crow (Hammond organ, backing vocals), Jamie Muhoberac (Hammond organ), John Pierce (bass guitar), John Shanks (keyboards), Dave Palmer (piano), Jessica James Nicks, Molly McVie, Madelyne Felsch (bk vocals)
Highest chart position: UK 6; US 3

Tall stories: Fleetwood in Malibu, 1984

"Cocaine is God's way of telling you that you've got too much money"

An audience with Mick Fleetwood! At home in Hawaii, the redoubtable drummer answers a batch of questions from his fans, and casts his eye over every era of his storied band. Which is his favourite Fleetwood Mac album? And how the hell is Peter Green?

TAKEN FROM UNCUT OCT 2008

"WHY DO I LIVE IN HAWAII?" ponders Mick Fleetwood. "Well, why wouldn't anyone want to live in Hawaii? What's not to like? I mean, it's just perfect, isn't it?" Fleetwood Mac's drummer, one-time manager and founder member is in his farmland home in Kula, Maui, a place where he's spent much of the past 35 years and where he and his family moved permanently a couple of years ago (he even found a place in nearby Napili for his mother). Now aged 61, the man who estimated that he spent $8 million on cocaine during his quarter-century habit – rendering him bankrupt in 1984 – has been clean for two decades and is now the proud father of four daughters (including six-year-old twins).

He's also making music again. He's joined some local musicians to form The Island Rumours Band, who play Fleetwood Mac tunes with a dash of Pacific colour ("We even have a Hawaiian slide guitar player!"), and he's likely to lead a Fleetwood Mac tour in 2009. These days he's more interested in his newly convened Mick Fleetwood Blues Band – where he plays Peter Green songs and blues standards with erstwhile Fleetwood Mac vocalist and guitarist Rick Vito – but right now he's focused on answering *Uncut* readers' questions. "So what have you got to ask this six-foot-six dyslexic?"

"WE USED THE MONEY WE HAD TO MAKE THE VERY BEST MUSIC WE POSSIBLY COULD"
MICK FLEETWOOD

STAR QUESTION

I was working on my *Cry Tough* album at the Sausalito Record Plant while you were creating *Rumours*. I used to see you all in the hallways and remain a big fan. How much were you involved in the songwriting and arranging process, and was most of the arranging done in the studio or in pre-production rehearsals?

Nils Lofgren

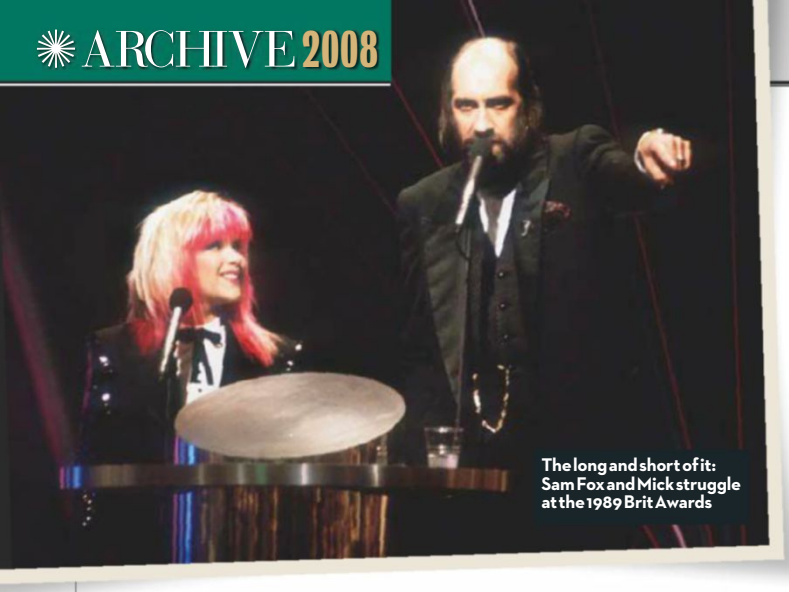
FLEETWOOD: Most of the arranging was done in the studio. Probably about 20 per cent was done prior to that by the songwriters – Chris, Stevie and Lindsey. John and I weren't involved in the direct songwriting, but were incredibly involved in the producing and arranging. I loved being a sounding board for the songwriters. One of the things that's so misunderstood about *Rumours* is that people used to say, "Oh, they're so rich, they spend so much on the making of an album." It was our money – not the record company's! And we can't think of anything better than to put the money we had into an artform to make the very best music we possibly could. And when you're in that position, it seems a very honourable thing to do!

Is it true that the band was so tired of working on *Tusk* that they approved the test pressings without completely listening to all four sides?

Steve Forbert, via email

That cannot be true. We were incredibly picky about stuff like that, and would never have signed off something without listening to it! *Tusk* followed up *Rumours*. We'd just made one of the biggest-selling albums of all time, so there was a lot of pressure. The inclination would have been to make more of the same. And so we didn't. We made a double-album – which we were told was suicide, because the record business was suffering – and it didn't sell that well, but it was exactly what the band needed. And Lindsey Buckingham, in

INTERVIEW: JOHN LEWIS. SIPA PRESS/REX SHUTTERSTOCK, BRIAN RASIC/AREX FEATURES



The long and short of it: Sam Fox and Mick struggle at the 1989 Brit Awards

retrospect, really pushed the envelope. He was quite into lots of weird punk stuff at the time. A lot of the bandmembers were a little dazed and confused about his methods, because he wanted to prepare stuff at home. I thought that was fine, as long as we can all get in the studio and play as a band, which is part of the creative process. In the end, that album turned out to be my favourite Fleetwood Mac album.

STAR QUESTION

I've watched the *Classic Albums* documentary on *Rumours* countless times, and I'm a huge fan of your late-'70s LPs. How did you spend so long in the studio? What technicalities did you obsess about?

Kieran Hebden, Four Tet

We were sticklers for using old '50s and '60s tube mics. People don't know how great they are. They were made, ostensibly, for classical and spoken word, and they're why those old recordings sound so organic and open. Old-school engineers from training grounds like the BBC understood how to place a mic for an orchestra, as they weren't able to fix it later digitally. So a lot of *Rumours* was recorded using mics to create an ambience you can't dial up on a board. I don't think anyone knows how to mic up these days!

When is the last time you or any of the Fleetwood Mac members spoke to Christine McVie?

Brian Townley, via email

We last chatted on the phone about six weeks ago. We're still very much in touch. She's like my sister. She's very well and very happy, living in Kent, near Canterbury. She keeps promising to come over to see me in Hawaii, although she hates flying!

When did you realise that Fleetwood Mac had made it?

Riley, Swansea

I think it was on my first trip to Zambia – I went out to a game reserve in the very early 1970s. And in the middle of Africa, I walked into the bar of a nearly empty hotel, where no one knew who I was, and they were playing an early Fleetwood Mac album. That was about as weird as it gets!

Who are your favourite drummers of all time?

Matthew, California

Well, I appreciate some jazz drummers, like Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson, but Charlie Watts, for me, is the man. His feel is just perfect. And there's a chap who played with BB King called Sonny Freeman, who I love. My childhood hero was the bandleader Sandy Nelson, who was like a Duane Eddy of the drumkit. He had big instrumental hits like "Teen Beat" and "Let There Be Drums". He was my absolute idol as a kid!

STAR QUESTION

When was the first time you realised that you were making serious money?

Ice Cube

Back in the early Fleetwood Mac days, we were so doing what we loved to do that, in truth, we really didn't notice that we had any money. It was only in about 1969 – about a year after we'd had a No 1 single and a couple of big hit albums – that the cash started coming in, and we realised that we didn't have to shunt around in the back of a van. Suddenly I was able to buy myself a decent car. And I really enjoy clothes, so there's a real relief when you can go out and get trousers made because you're six-foot-six – I didn't have to wear jeans that were two inches too small! But you know what they say – cocaine is God's way of telling you that you've got too much money...

> "CHRISTINE AND I CHATTED ABOUT SIX WEEKS AGO. SHE'S LIKE MY SISTER"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

You recorded an album called *The Visitor* in Ghana – have you always been into African music?

Gerald, Holland

I never really researched it in depth, but I've always loved that thunderous, thumpy drumming that people sometimes associate with African music. Basically I'm a tom-tom maniac. That's part of my musical signature. You can hear it on the track "Tusk", obviously, but it's there on "Albatross" – which is just mallets on tom-toms – and "Black Magic Woman" and also on "Go Your Own Way". I've always been attracted to simple and fairly primal approaches to playing.

Can you remember the first gig you ever went to?

Jan, Newcastle

Oh yes. It was in Gloucester and it was a singer called Eden Kane, who you've probably never heard of! He was one of those English Elvis figures, you know – along with Billy Fury, Shane Fenton and Adam Faith, that era of English pop music – and he had that requisite Brylcreem look. He'd just had a massive, No 1 hit with "Well I Ask You" and I went to see him with some older schoolfriends. He was great!

Do you still keep in touch with Sam Fox? You two were so good together!

Richard, Milton Keynes

I haven't seen her since that awful show we did together! *[Fleetwood and the former Page 3 Girl presented the 1989 Brit Awards – with multiple "technical issues" – live on national television]* My memories of that night are that both of us got completely duped and are still branded by it today. But truly, nothing that went wrong was our fault, at all. We rehearsed that show and it was perfect. But there was some boyband who were famous at the time [*Bros*], and the organisers thought they'd spice up the show by putting their fans in the front rows. So, for the first time, instead of having people in suits in the front row, they had 300 screaming teenage girls! And they screamed and screamed through the whole show, to the point where none of the technicians or the runners or the people in the orchestra pit could hear a thing, and nor could we. It technically fell apart to such an extent that it made me and Sam look like a couple of idiots. Still, what can you do? It's become one of those gorgeous television moments that people actually remember nearly 20 years later!

How is Peter Green?

Rory, Wimbledon

I spoke to Peter about eight months ago. He's well. I still look forward to walking on a stage with Peter or having him walk on the stage with me in some form. He is my mentor and, in truth, this tour that we're doing in Europe can be seen as a dedication to him. You won't hear us play "Rhiannon", or "Go Your Own Way". It's all pure '67 to '70, and I'm very proud of Peter and everything he did for us. I hope he comes to see us play.

Do you think that the Kirwan/Welch period of the Mac is overlooked?

John, Forest Hill

To some large extent, yes. And I think that Danny was a very underrated guitar player. He lived for sure in the shadow of Peter Green, and yet Danny was a unique player. Peter and Danny made incredible music together, and Danny got slightly forgotten. I think that he has a real place in Fleetwood Mac. As does Bob.

Eden Kane: an English Elvis

You seemed to go through a lot of guitarists in a very short period of time: Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, Danny Kirwan and Bob Welch all exited within a few years of each other.

GETTY IMAGES; REX FEATURES

The young ones: Jeremy Spencer, John McVie, Mick Fleetwood, Danny Kirwan and Peter Green in 1968

Mick, with Rick Vito, touring as the Mick Fleetwood Blues Band, Hamburg 2008

What are your memories now of that time?

Big Phil, Buckhurst Hill

It depends what you call a short amount of time – maybe you've got a better read on it. But we have had a lot of changes in Fleetwood Mac over the years. And that's somewhat unique in itself – that a band can survive and have so many people that are a part of that musical legacy. Bob, Danny, Jeremy Spencer... we've had some incredible guitar players in FM. And I'm not sure what period you're thinking – Fleetwood Mac have been going for 40 years.

STAR QUESTION

Was there any conflict in the early years between sticking to your blues roots and turning to the more commercial melodies like "Albatross" and "Man Of The World" that you eventually found success with?

Midge Ure

I suppose the conflict – if that's the right word – happened in about 1970, around the time that Peter Green and then Jeremy Spencer left. That was when we made a conscious effort to move away from blues. Our 1971 album, *Future Games*, didn't do very well in the UK, but it was a useful stepping stone from our blues base to the kind of studio-based melodic rock act we ended up transforming into. But that's one of the strengths of Fleetwood Mac – the fact that we've changed so radically and still remained a band.

Was *Future Games* underrated?

Victoria Gibb, Chepstow

I love that album, I love Bob Welch and the stuff we did. When Bob left [*in December 1974*] we were all devastated. And lo and behold, him leaving Fleetwood Mac led us, in truth, to ask Stevie and Lindsey to join Fleetwood Mac and then it became a whole other level of... the biggest part of our story. So who's to say? I don't think that Bob had any regrets leaving because he had a very successful solo career that I helped produce for him. And there were no bad feelings. We all sang on one of his biggest hits, "Sentimental Lady" – he redid that as a solo artist, and FM all played on it. And his career was alive and well for as long... he had a long solo run, and then that was pretty much it for him. He lives in Nashville and he's fit and well. He's eternally young – I dunno what he takes! Again, I say you'll never get old, Bob! He turns up when we're on the road – once every few years he always comes. So all those guys are part of Fleetwood Mac, especially the guitar players.

> "THAT'S ONE OF OUR STRENGTHS – TO CHANGE SO RADICALLY AND REMAIN A BAND"
> MICK FLEETWOOD

There's no doubt that Fleetwood Mac has been a home for guitar players. And doing what I'm doing now with Rick Vito, who was in FM with Billy Burnette when Lindsey left... Doing this tour that we're doing in Europe is a propos in terms of me and Rick loving blues, number one, and going back and having so much fun revisiting the old Fleetwood Mac days.

GETTY IMAGES; ACTION PRESS/REX FEATURES

RELEASE DATES 1969 - 2013

COMPILATIONS & LIVE ALBUMS

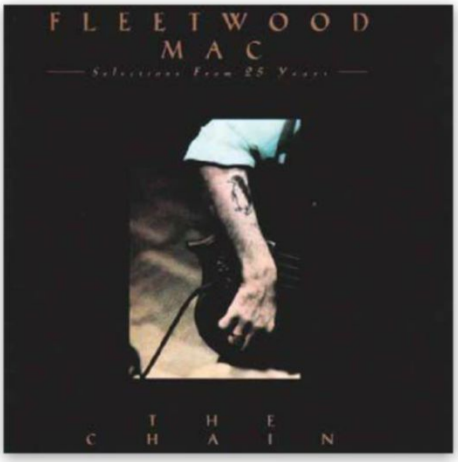
Can Peter Green survive alongside Stevie Nicks? And whither Bob Welch? The minefield of Fleetwood Mac comps and live albums.

BY DAVID CAVANAGH

YOU'D THINK IT would be possible, in this globalised age when most of the major record companies have effectively all merged into one, to sort out the legalities, sign off on the contracts and put together a 'Complete' or a 'Definitive' or an 'Ultimate' Fleetwood Mac compilation that was actually worthy of the name. Something that started with "Albatross" and proceeded chronologically, ending with "Sad Angel" from the 2013 digital download, *Extended Play*. Something that could unite the Green-Spencer and Buckingham-Nicks incarnations of the band the way that *Forty Licks*, after years of deadlock, united the catalogues of Decca and Rolling Stones Records. But in fact, only two Mac compilations (out of more than two dozen) have ever attempted this task – the UK version of **The Very Best Of Fleetwood Mac** ★★★ in 2002 and the 4CD boxset **25 Years – The Chain** ★★★ a decade earlier – and the reason is not just that different songs are owned by different labels. There seems to be an industry-wide consensus that Mac's British blues period clashes sonically with the pristine pop-rock of the later years (particularly when compilations are as arbitrarily sequenced as on those two albums), creating a jarring experience for fans. It's unlikely that the two faces of Mac will ever appear side by side on an anthology again. Peter Green's songs were left off the US edition of *The Very Best Of*, and when the LP was reissued in 2009, its tracklisting – even in Britain – conformed to that template. The band's blues history was ignored and 1975 hit "Over My Head" was used as the cut-off point.

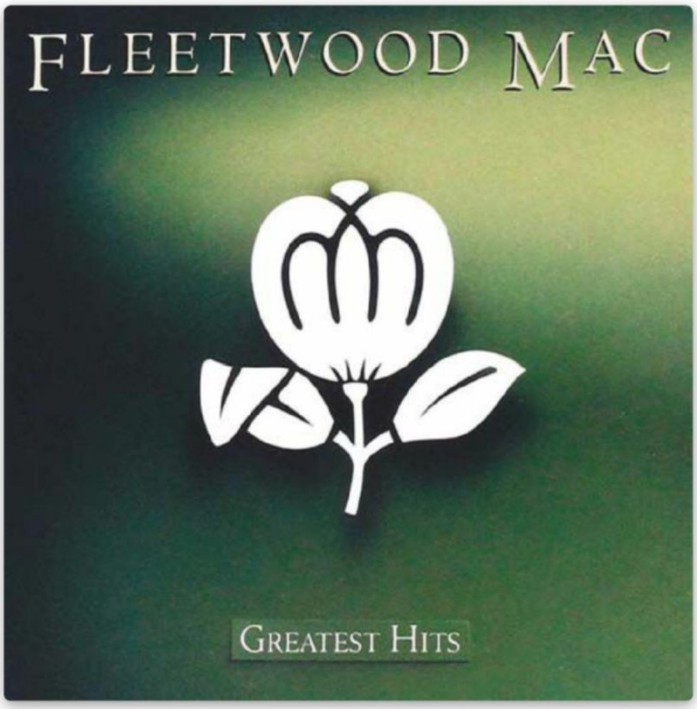
If that seems revisionist, many people would counter that Mac's blues era has had more than enough exposure on compilations, dominating roughly three-quarters of the product out there. Collections of early Mac material have been coming out virtually since day one – the first as early as January 1969, when "Albatross" was in the charts. **English Rose** ★★★, a US-only release stitched together from non-album singles and the torso of *Mr Wonderful*, gave US listeners their first taste of "Black Magic Woman" – soon to be covered by Santana – as well as introducing them to Danny Kirwan, who'd joined Mac the previous summer. But, of course, the release of *English Rose* meant that British fans needed something with "Black Magic Woman" and "Albatross" on it too, so **The Pious Bird Of Good Omen** ★★★ was compiled for the UK market in August '69. A round-up of A-sides, B-sides and album cuts, it also featured two songs by a Mississippi-born pianist Eddie Boyd, who the group's label Blue Horizon was promoting at the time.

Since then, the world has rarely gone short of blues-based Mac comps. Some of them – including **Vintage Years** ★★★, **The Collection** ★★★ and **The Essential Fleetwood Mac** ★★★ – have mined the same Peter Green compositions and the same Jeremy Spencer woke-up-this-morning-isms, merely sequencing them in a slightly different order. A bumper year for best-ofs was 1971, when CBS and Epic hurried to recoup some investment after Green's and Spencer's shock departures. **The Original Fleetwood Mac** ★★ papered over the cracks with 1967-68 outtakes. **Black Magic Woman** ★★★ was a US-only twofer of the debut LP and *English Rose* (now even the compilations were being released as comps). Far more useful to Mac fans was **Greatest Hits** ★★★★, a 12-song selection that gathered the singles under one roof – including "Albatross", "Man Of The World", "Oh Well", "The Green Manalishi (With The Two Prong Crown)" – and tagged on a couple of smouldering blues from *Mr Wonderful* at the end. Its brownish-red sleeve a familiar sight in record shops for many years, *Greatest Hits* eventually vanished from the racks and was superseded by **The Best Of Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac** ★★★ in 2002. A CD twice as long as its vinyl forerunner, it found plenty of room for extra tracks. One, the Christine McVie-sung "I'd Rather Go Blind", was a 1969 hit by


FLEETWOOD
MAC
THE
CHAIN

Fleetwood Mac
English Rose
DIGITALLY RE-MASTERED

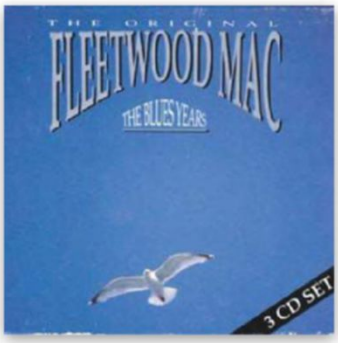
THE VERY
BEST OF
FLEETWOOD MAC

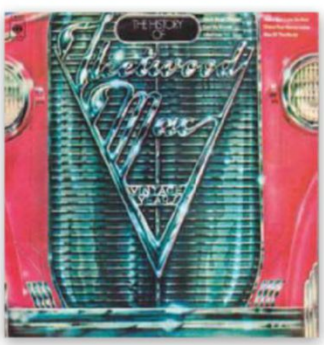

FLEETWOOD MAC
GREATEST HITS

FLEETWOOD MAC
AND
CHRISTINE PERFECT
Albatross

THE ORIGINAL
FLEETWOOD MAC

FLEETWOOD MAC

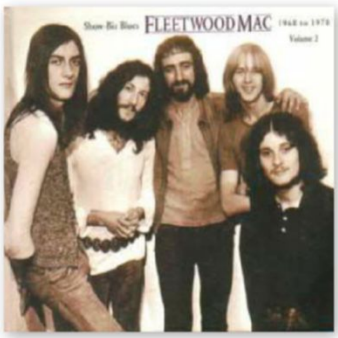

THE ORIGINAL
FLEETWOOD MAC
THE BLUES YEARS
3 CD SET


THE BODY OF
Fleetwood Mac

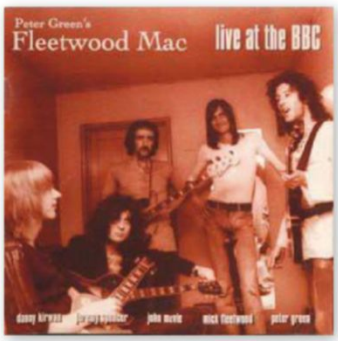
The Essential FLEETWOOD MAC

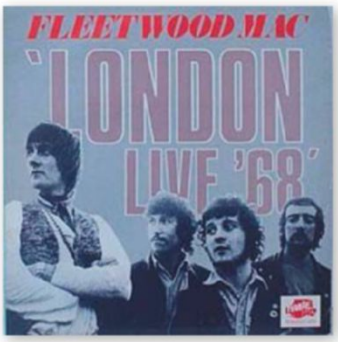
VOLUME TWO
BLUES JAM IN CHICAGO
FLEETWOOD MAC · OTIS SPANN · WILLIE DIXON · J. T. BROWN
HONEYBOY EDWARDS · S. P. LEARY

FLEETWOOD
MAC
Greatest Hits

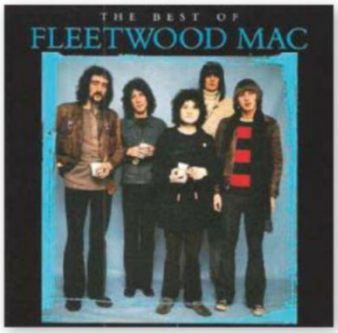

Show Biz Blues
FLEETWOOD MAC
1968 to 1970
Volume 1

Fleetwood Mac in Chicago
Featuring:


Peter Green's
Fleetwood Mac
live at the BBC


FLEETWOOD MAC
'LONDON
LIVE '68'

Fleetwood Mac
CLASSIC MAC
DREAMS
GO YOUR OWN WAY
YOU MAKE LOVING FUN
AND MORE

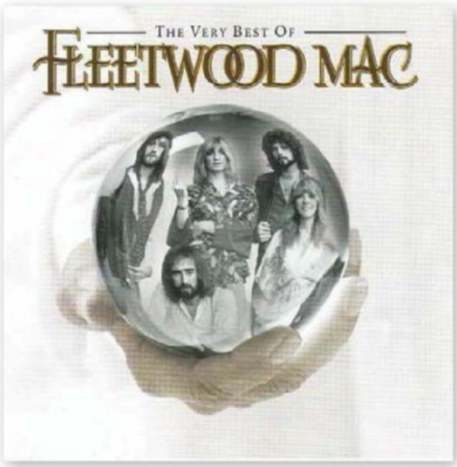

THE BEST OF
FLEETWOOD MAC

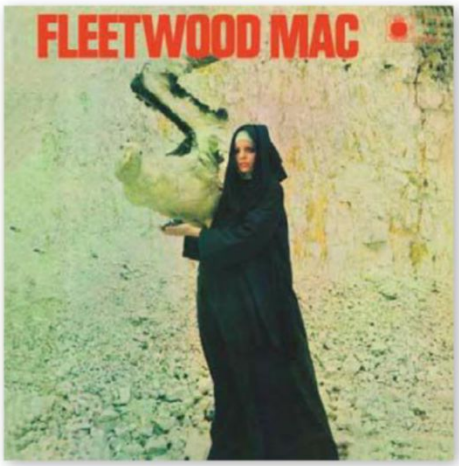
FLEETWOOD MAC
LIVE & STUDIO RECORDINGS
MADISON BLUES

FLEETWOOD MAC
LIVE

The Vaudeville Years of
FLEETWOOD MAC
1968 to 1970

Fleetwood Mac
The Best Of Fleetwood Mac


THE VERY BEST OF
FLEETWOOD MAC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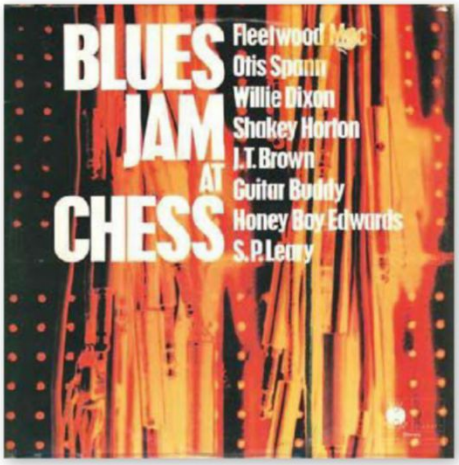
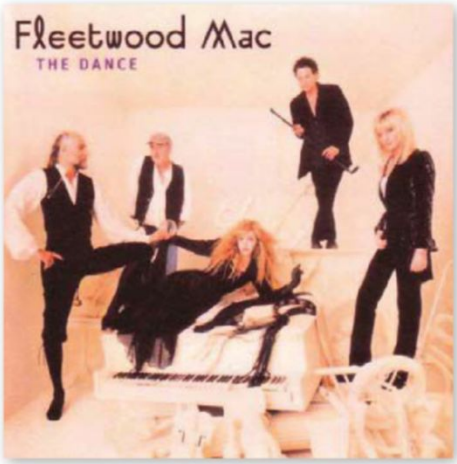
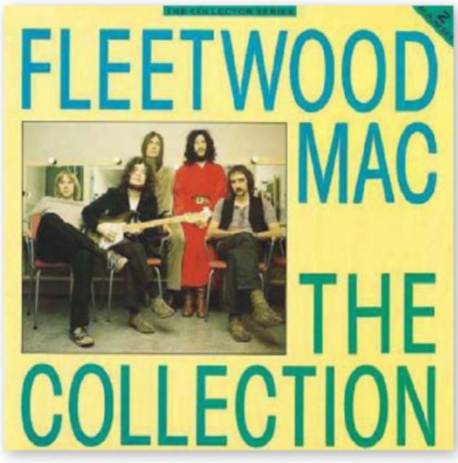

BLUES JAM AT CHESS
Fleetwood Mac
Otis Spann
Willie Dixon
Shakey Horton
J.T. Brown
Guitar Buddy
Honey Boy Edwards
S.P. Leary


Fleetwood Mac
THE DANCE


FLEETWOOD MAC
THE COLLECTION

Chicken Shack. Another was an ambient remix of "Albatross". And still they came. **The Best Of Fleetwood Mac** ★★★ was a 1976 German comp focusing mainly on *Then Plays On* and the singles around it. **Man Of The World** ★★, released by CBS in 1978, sought to take advantage of the *Rumours* phenomenon by cobbling together the best of *Greatest Hits* and unrelated extracts from a 1969 jam session in Chicago with Buddy Guy and Willie Dixon. The Chicago recordings, which ran to some 100 minutes, saw the light of day in a range of guises, including **Blues Jam At Chess** ★★, **Blues Jam In Chicago – Volume Two** ★★ and the double-album **Fleetwood Mac In Chicago** ★★.

It took until 1988 for the band's compilers to turn their attention to the Buckingham-Nicks era. **Greatest Hits** ★★★★ – no relation to the '71 album – went eight times platinum in America (and sold an estimated 20m copies worldwide) with its irresistible assortment of singles from *Fleetwood Mac*, *Rumours*, *Tusk*, *Mirage* and *Tango*.... As a compendium it was entry-level, but the hits, as the saying went, kept on coming. Two new songs, Nicks' "No Questions Asked" and McVie's "As Long As You Follow", were added as bonuses.

The 1990s delved once again into the distant past. **Original Fleetwood Mac: The Blues Years** ★★ repackaged the same old same old. **The Best Of Fleetwood Mac** ★★ – in 1996 – became the second album to boast that title, and it wasn't true this time, either. A series of more fan-friendly releases in the late '90s and early '00s – the 3CD set **Madison Blues** ★★★, the two-disc **The Vaudeville Years** ★★★ and **Show-Biz Blues** ★★★ and the 6CD boxset **The Complete Blue Horizon Sessions 1967-1969** ★★★★ – managed to unearth rarities, outtakes, collaborations and live versions to satisfy aficionados and completists.

The periods of Mac that lose out when compilers do their compiling are the years with Danny Kirwan and Bob Welch at the helm (1971-72) and the albums where Welch shouldered the burden with McVie (1973-74). Half a dozen tracks on *25 Years – The Chain* are the only acknowledgement of this hitless interregnum. With Welch dead and Kirwan missing in action, the idea of Warner Music Group green-lighting a retrospective of their finest moments seems a dim prospect. A shame. Some would sit beautifully alongside mid-'70s Buckingham and Nicks songs.

Two years ago, **Opus Collection** ★★★ – an idiot's guide to post-"Rhiannon" Mac licensed for sale in branches of Starbucks – became the most recent addition to the band's compilation pile. They now have more than the Grateful Dead, The Steve Miller Band and CSN&Y combined. Many of them disappeared as quickly as they arrived, but others have endured to this day, their fortunes dictated by current activities in the Mac camp. As the 2014-15 world tour hit London in May this year, *The Very Best Of Fleetwood Mac*, a multi-million seller since 2002, returned for another long spell in the Top 10. The definitive Mac comp may be an elusive beast, but of the 25 or so non-definitive ones, *The Very Best Of...* has proved itself the winner over time.

Fleetwood Mac's live albums, unlike their compilations, took the plunge late – and spent 20 years digging back into the '60s. Released in December 1980, **Live** ★★★★ was a double-album recorded on the *Tusk* tour, containing strong versions of "Sara" and "Rhiannon", and including two new songs performed at a soundcheck (Nicks' "Fireflies" and McVie's "One More Night"). Despite these attractions, and a charming cover of a Beach Boys song ("The Farmer's Daughter"), *Live* slipped into almost instant obscurity – it charted at only 31 in Britain – and nowadays crops up in online reappraisals of underrated albums. An excess of fretboard showboating by Buckingham, as if hoping to place himself in the lineage of virtuoso Mac guitarists, is its only drawback.

For the real deal, **Live In Boston** ★★★★★ – issued in various configurations with titles such as *Boston*, *Boston Blues*, *The Boston Box* and *Live At The Boston Tea Party (Fleetwood Mac In Concert February 5, 6, 7 1970)* – is a breathtaking Peter Green showcase for lovers of majestic solos and high-intensity improv. With its excellent sound quality, it's a gripping document of the five-man Mac a month before the fateful party in Munich. Spencer unwinds with a pair of glorious swinging shuffles ("Red Hot Mama", "Madison Blues"). Green, however, has a personality that's harder to read. Alternately raucous and ruminative, he sounds like he's staring into the abyss on "Jumping At Shadows" – a song by the British bluesman Duster Bennett – where his spine-tingling solo seems beside itself with grief. But when he turns the amps up, the future of rock takes shape. The 24-minute "Rattlesnake Shake", a twin-guitar tour de force starring Green and Kirwan, sets the template for Wishbone Ash and Thin Lizzy, rocks up a storm like Blue Öyster Cult and climaxes in a frenzy like AC/DC.

Next to materialise in the megastores – in 1992 – was **Live At The Marquee** ★★, a 25-year-old audience tape of Mac's second-ever gig in August 1967. Little more than a legalised bootleg, it nevertheless had historical value for fans of British blues, and at least Green's guitar was front and centre in the dingy mix. **Live At The BBC** ★★★★, a two-disc digest of radio sessions cut between 1967 and 1971, visited much of the same musical territory as *Live In Boston* – albeit in mono – and pointedly juggled the chronology so that Green's exit from the band, in May 1970, didn't seriously weaken the second disc. Mac were quite prolific as a BBC session band – they did four for John Peel's *Top Gear* in 1968 alone – but easily the most poignant was the one in July 1970, where Jeremy Spencer manfully tried to plug the gap left by Green by rolling out his Buddy Holly impersonations.

London Live '68 ★★★, taped at the Polytechnic Of Central London in April of that year, has Spencer dominating proceedings for the first 15 minutes even though Green is present onstage. How strange that a band with a genius in their ranks would hide him at the back for four songs while the other guitarist sang Elmore James numbers. Nine months later, rocking the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles – **Shrine '69** ★★★ – Mac were even more democratic, divvying up the lead vocals between Green, Spencer and Kirwan. Introduced as "one of England's finest blues groups", they were loose and laidback that night, and sufficiently versatile to give their Californian audience a faithful version of "Albatross" and a rollicking rendition of "Great Balls Of Fire".

Released in 1997, **The Dance** ★★★ was only the second Mac live album of the Buckingham-Nicks era. Recorded at Warner Bros Studios in Burbank for an MTV special, it stuck primarily to the crowd-pleasers but offered a few new songs, among them Buckingham's "Bleed To Love Her", which would later resurface on *Say You Will*. McVie's "Temporary One" was her last contribution as a writer before leaving the band in 1998. Enormously successful for a live album, *The Dance* is reported to have sold more than six million copies, which is five and a half million more than *Live* sold in 1980. It's a very unfair world.

When the Say You Will tour reached Boston in September 2003, Fleetwood Mac recorded a second live album in the city where the Green-Spencer-Kirwan lineup had enjoyed a stunning triumph. The two concerts couldn't have been held in more contrasting venues – in 1970 they played a 400-capacity psychedelic ballroom while the Mac of 2003 filled a giant sports arena – but the DVD/CD set **Live In Boston** ★★★ has its merits, not least a captivating "Gypsy" from Nicks and a solo pièce de résistance from Buckingham on "Big Love". Cities may expand, and Christine McVie may come and go, but the sparks will always fly between Lindsey and Stevie.

> "STRANGE THAT A BAND WITH A GENIUS IN THEIR RANKS WOULD HIDE HIM AT THE BACK"

CRITICS' VERDICT

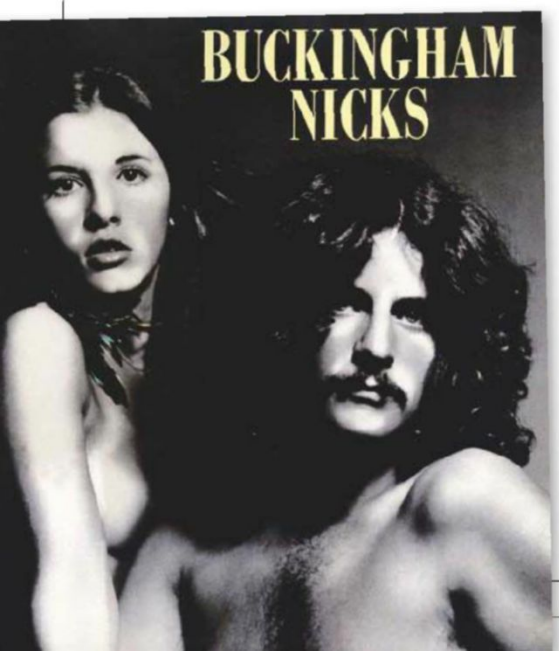
"After years of being dismissed as bloated, coked-up rock dinosaurs, even the most jaded punk purist will quietly agree that Fleetwood Mac's late '70s trilogy – 1975's *Fleetwood Mac*, 1977's *Rumours* and 1979's *Tusk* – are works of unalloyed studio-pop genius."

JOHN LEWIS ON *THE VERY BEST OF FLEETWOOD MAC*, UNCUT, DECEMBER 2009

The Mac backstage at the Fifth American Music Awards, Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, January 16, 1978 in Santa Monica, California

MISCELLANY

SOLO ALBUMS, VIDEOS, RARITIES AND MORE... MARK BENTLEY DIGS DEEP FOR GOLD DUST!



EARLY ARTEFACTS

BUCKINGHAM NICKS

POLYDOR, 1973

THE MOST IMPORTANT album the Mac never made – but is it any good? *Buckingham Nicks* is the record without which there would be no Mac as we know it. Mick Fleetwood, searching for a new guitarist, first heard it at LA's Sound City studios, and loved it. Buckingham's album closer "Frozen Love" was the song to impress Mick that day in 1974, but that axe-heavy excursion is far from representative of this 10-track album. *Buckingham Nicks* is generally a low-key, introspective record which struggled to differentiate itself from the plethora of low-key, introspective California albums of the mid '70s. Polydor thought so too, and dropped them swiftly. It may well have been the ticket to rock's greatest package deal, but it's nothing more than a pleasant, well-played, well-sung collection. It's good, rather than great.

Buckingham Nicks' true value is as a historical document. "Crystal" was reworked for *Fleetwood Mac*, Buckingham revisited the quicksilver fingerpickery of "Stephanie" for "Never Going Back Again", while the bluesy riff for "Lola (My Love)" bears striking resemblance to "World Turning". There is brilliance here, of course: Nicks' spiky, snaking "Long Distance Winner" is one of her best; Buckingham's "Don't Let Me Down

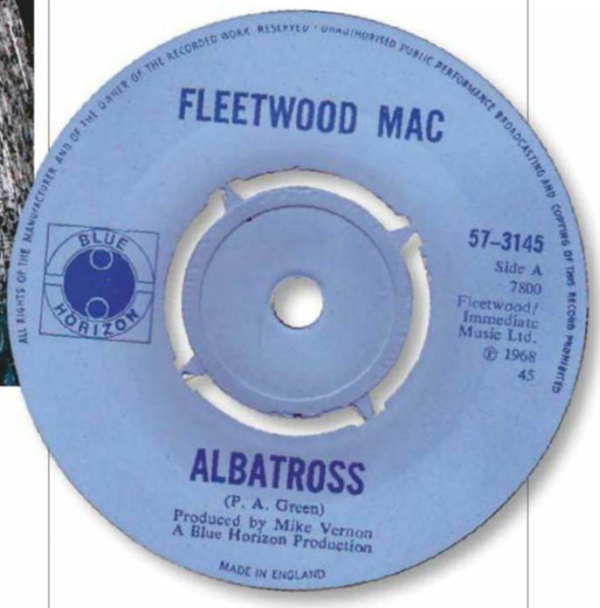
GETTY IMAGES

Again" is an early indicator of that frenetic, intense pop rock he does so well. The album shows craft, but lacks heft. Maybe these two needed a great rhythm section as much as Mick and John needed songwriters. The duo apparently own the rights, and despite the odd murmuring, the album is still not officially available on CD. You can draw your own conclusions about that.

BLUE HORIZON

THE MAC'S FIRST RECORD LABEL

ENTREPRENEURIAL DECCA PRODUCER Mike Vernon – who worked with the Bluesbreakers and the "London Boys" era David Bowie – is indisputably one of the key figures of the '60s blues boom, and Fleetwood Mac were his commercial standard-bearers. Vernon founded specialist mailorder blues imprint Purdah before establishing the Blue Horizon label in 1965. The first release was by Howlin' Wolf lieutenant Hubert Sumlin, and available only through *R&B Monthly* magazine. Vernon ran an undeniably creative business model that included reissuing old material by vaunted US blues stars (BB King, Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup) alongside new recordings from legends

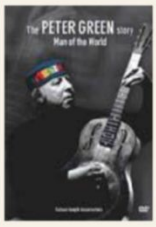


backed by British musicians (Otis Spann, Champion Jack Dupree), and a smattering of new releases from young British blues acts.

It was with Fleetwood Mac, though, that the label gained wider recognition – those first two albums both made the UK Top 10, the *Pious Bird* comp made the Top 20, and "Albatross", of course, became the band's first and only ever UK No 1 single. This success fuelled further 'new artist' releases including Chicken Shack, Bacon Fat and even Vernon's own solo album, 1971's *Bring It Back Home*. The label closed the following year, and many Blue Horizon releases are stupidly rare and highly collectable – with lost Brit blues classics from the likes of Gordon Smith, Rick Hayward and Mighty Baby particularly highly prized. Vinyl fans should seek out the trusty *Super-Duper Blues* sampler, which is cheaply available secondhand and tells Blue Horizon's eclectic story in microcosm.

SELECTED VIDEOGRAPHY

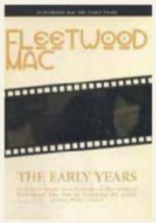
There are myriad DVD (and VHS!) releases out there – we've focused on those that are widely available and have interviews, live performances and footage. They're listed in band chronology rather than by release date, and together they tell the Mac's full story...



THE PETER GREEN STORY

SCANBOX, 2007
WIENERWORLD, 2009

This glorious official doc of Britain's lost guitar genius is packed with heartfelt interviews, footage and, of course, a full analysis of his much-documented descent. A focus on the early years with the Mac makes this essential viewing.



FLEETWOOD MAC THE EARLY YEARS

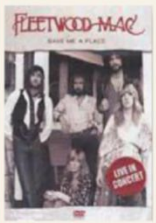
PLASTIC HEAD, 2007

This dubiously packaged release is worth seeking out for completists, containing some decent live footage of the Peter Green lineup. A reissue of a much earlier VHS release, it is marred by some less-than-accurate chronology, a lack of some key performances, and insultingly irritating commentary over the top of the songs.

RUMOURS CLASSIC ALBUMS

EAGLE ROCK, 2007

First aired in 1997, this is possibly the most famous in the often excellent *Classic Albums* series. The *Rumours* story is told with direct-to-camera confessionals, anecdotes, insights and in-studio footage. Alongside forensic analysis of the writing and recording process, you'll feel uncomfortably close to a band who were uncomfortably close to each other.



SAVE ME A PLACE

BLUE LINE, 2015

There is plenty of footage from the 1979 Tusk tour out there – start, as ever, with YouTube – but at time of writing no widely available release to buy and own the old-fashioned way. There is, though, this rather shaky capture of the US-only, short-lived 1982 Mirage Tour, filmed at the Great Western Forum in Inglewood, California. There's a whiff of going through the motions, and the sound and picture quality isn't great.

TANGO IN THE NIGHT

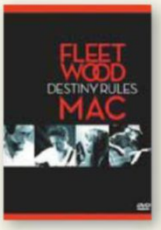
RHINO, 2003

This companion to the band's '80s apogee was filmed at San Francisco's Cow Palace in December 1987. There's no Buckingham – he'd quit because he didn't want to tour the album – and his absence is the tusked elephant in the room. Replacement guitarists Billy Burnette and Rick Vito do a decent job, but there are better live offerings.

THE DANCE

RHINO, 1998

Rumours' 20th anniversary was the excuse to revisit that record's power, and this excellent document of the '97 MTV special is a bona fide celebration. McVie and Fleetwood are clearly having a ball. Alongside all the big hits, banter and some lesser-aired rarities like "Silver Springs", you also get Bucko's solo "Big Love" and – naturally – the University Of Southern California Marching Band bringing military intensity to "Tusk".



DESTINY RULES

SANCTUARY, 2013

Proof that some shit is hard to forget: another inner-sanctum exposé, this time of the making of *Say You Will*. Great studio footage gets to the heart of the band's creative process – Lindsey's offhand paranoia and amazing axe-noodling are undeniably entertaining.

Blow your own hair: Nicks live in Rotterdam, June 1988

PAUL BERGEN/REDFERNS

GOING THEIR OWN WAY

Solo adventures outside the Mac

Buckingham: unfettered and odd

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

"READING THE PAPER saw a review/Said I was a visionary, but nobody knew..." Buckingham's solo career has been less successful, and much lower profile, than his work with the Mac. And those lyrics (from *Under The Skin*'s "Not Too Late") perhaps reveal his frustration at a lack of personal commercial and critical traction. His solo work can be indulgent, unfettered and odd, and it may be that a full album of Buckingham compositions is just too weird for your casual Fleetwood Mac listener. His of-the-time '80s work blends high-sheen pop, like the dreamy hit single "Trouble" and 1984's "Go Insane", alongside a whole heap of woozy, Beach Boys/Todd Rundgren craziness. Synths and gated snares are not the best canvas for his intense, often intricate songwriting. The later albums are more intimate, confessional and enjoyable, with *Gift Of Screws* the pick of an intriguing catalogue.

Albums list: *Law And Order* (Warners, 1981); *Go Insane* (Reprise, 1984); *Out Of The Cradle* (Reprise, 1992); *Under The Skin* (Reprise, 2006); *Gift Of Screws* (Reprise, 2008); *Seeds We Sow* (Eagle, 2011).

Stevie Nicks: ethereal, wildly successful

STEVIE NICKS

THE MOST COMMERCIALLY successful solo flights – by some distance – are the ones taken by Stevie Nicks. Her Tom Petty-produced debut was a US No 1 and sold squillions, and she's had five further US Top 10 albums. (Compare that to Buckingham, whose best US chart positioning is No 32.) You know what you're getting with a Stevie album, and she has never strayed too far from the mystical, ethereal songwriting that marks her best contributions to the Mac. Punctuated by big singles like "Edge Of Seventeen", "Rooms On Fire" and "Talk To Me" she has created an impressive catalogue, best initially explored via 2007 comp *Crystal Visions – The Very Best of Stevie Nicks*.

Albums list: *Bella Donna* (Modern, 1981); *The Wild Heart* (Modern, 1983); *Rock A Little* (Modern, 1985); *The Other Side Of The Mirror* (Modern, 1989); *Street Angel* (Modern, 1994); *Trouble in Shangri-La* (Reprise, 2001); *In Your Dreams* (Reprise, 2011); *24 Karat Gold: Songs From The Vault* (Reprise, 2014).

CHRISTINE McVIE

CHRISTINE PERFECT, AS she was, was signed to Blue Horizon as a member of Chicken Shack, and her voice, keyboards and compositions feature on the blues outfit's two albums for the label – 1968's *40 Blue Fingers, Freshly Packed And Ready to Serve*, and the following year's *OK Ken?*. She's much less prolific as a solo artist than her colleagues – averaging one solo album every 20-odd years. Her first solo release, 1970's *Christine Perfect*, does a decent job of living up to that maiden name: with beautifully groovy, whispery, delicate blues-folk, it's pretty much a must-have. It's surprisingly funky, too – "That's Saying A Lot", with its snapping breakbeat, has been sampled by Mos Def.

Albums list: *Christine Perfect* (Blue Horizon, 1970), *Christine McVie* (Warners, 1984), *In The Meantime* (Sanctuary, 2004).

Fleetwood and McVie: brothers in rhythm

MICK FLEETWOOD & JOHN McVIE

THE MAC'S VAUNTED rhythm section have cut a handful of albums individually – and the blues feature heavily. Mick's side project, The Zoo, showcased his unmistakeable drumming style, and this shape-shifting band would go on to include future Maccers Bekka Bramlett and Billy Burnette. His first release is the most intriguing. Recorded in Ghana, *The Visitor* features George Harrison (on *Tusk* remake "Walk A Thin Line"), while a certain Peter Greenbaum delivers vocals and guitars on his own Mac standard "Rattlesnake Shake".

McVie has been less prolific, but his 1992 solo release is certainly one to look out for. Vocalist Lola Thomas is the surprise package, powering through a series of Jools Hollandish blues-rock balladry. It all sounds like fun, and a nice break from the intensity of the day job.

Albums list (Mick Fleetwood): *The Visitor* (RCA, 1981), *I'm Not Me* (RCA, 1983), *Shakin' The Cage* aka The Zoo (Mushroom, 1992), *Total Drumming* (Sony, 2001), *Something Big* (Sanctuary, 2004).

Albums list (John McVie): *John McVie's Gotta Band Featuring Lola Thomas* (Warners, 1992).

Christine McVie: sampled by Mos Def

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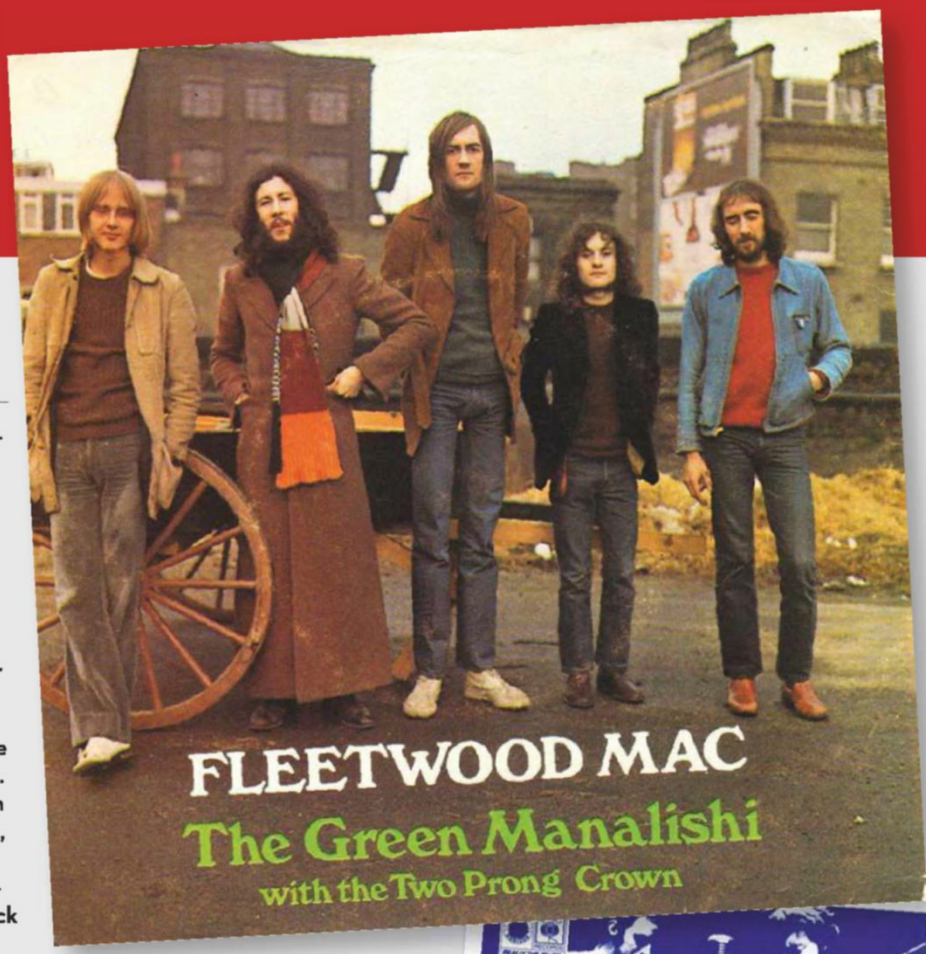
WHAT YOU HAD, AND WHAT YOU LOST

A brief guide to Fleetwood Mac rarities and collectables



FOR A BAND with truly international appeal, and nearly 50 years of success, Fleetwood Mac are not as collectable as you might think. Values of their records and memorabilia don't reach anywhere near the insane price tags of releases from The Beatles, the Stones, The Who or Dylan. Their back catalogue isn't as subject to the forensic levels of collector scrutiny those artists enjoy. They don't have a $5,000 'holy grail' release, or a slew of hard-to-find promos and one-offs. If you've got a stack of *Rumours*-lineup vinyl in the garage, it is unlikely to turn you into a Gold Dust Woman, or man for that matter.

What you do get, perhaps unsurprisingly, is two clear lines of collectability. First up is the Peter Green incarnation – those early albums and singles on the Blue Horizon and Reprise labels. The early 7in singles were issued with funky picture sleeves – "I Believe My Time Ain't Long"/ "Rambling Pony" is a celebrated three-figure item and other Blue Horizon singles such as "Black Magic Woman" (a Top 40 hit, remember) chips in at around £50 for a mint pic-sleeve copy. The hyper-rare Dutch version, in a different sleeve, is five times that.

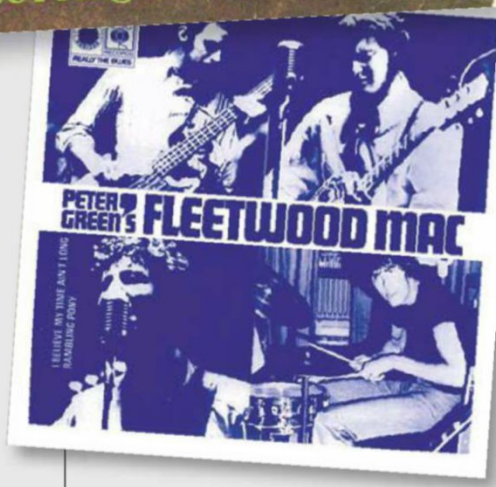
If you've got the UK picture sleeve version of "The Green Manalishi", on Reprise, then you've just raised the value of that from around a tenner to closer to £70 or £80, depending on condition. Standard UK issue singles in company sleeves are much less desirable. Don't forget that this version of the Mac released seven UK Top 40 singles, including four Top 10s and one No 1 – a much better return than any other lineup of the band.

The original first press albums, on both Blue Horizon and Reprise, are highly sought-after. As an example, a mint pressing of *Mr Wonderful* made £343 online in 2013. *Then Play On*, again in superb condition, fetched over £300 recently. All Green-era LPs – in great nick – will be worth in excess of £100-£150 on a good day, and these are the jewels in Mac's three prong crown.

The Bob Welch-era albums don't fetch these prices, but they are relatively rare in the UK at least. None charted, and £30 should still get you a copy of *Heroes Are Hard To Find* or *Mystery To Me*, with some change. The singles – each one a flop – are also quite collectable. The German issue of "For Your Love"/ "Hypnotised" is worth £20-ish.

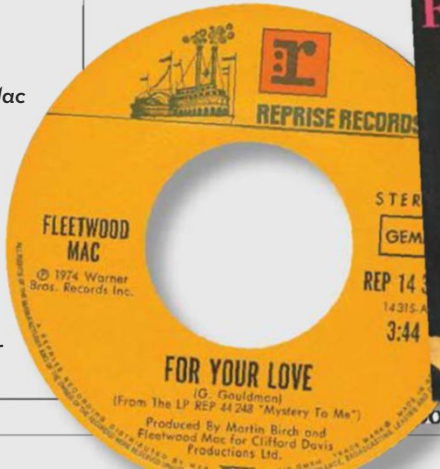
> "SIGNED MAC ALBUMS – EVEN *MIRAGE*! – HAVE SOLD FOR $300"

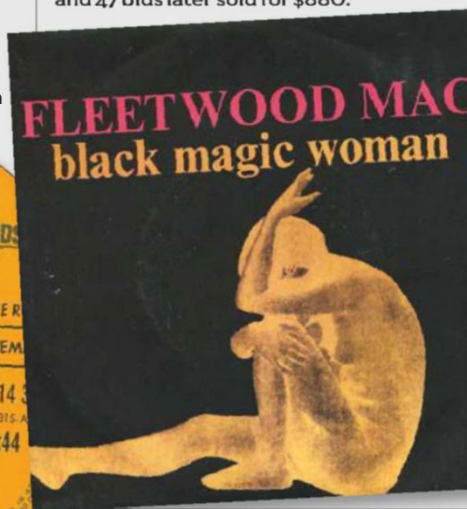
You'll know *Rumours* has sold in excess of 40 million worldwide, so your much-loved copy, with its textured sleeve, is by no means scarce. Collectors of the Buckingham-Nicks lineup will pay for condition, however – spankingly clean original pressings of *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours* are now starting to make serious money. The album is brilliantly produced and recorded of course – a real audiophile treat – and a sealed US first pressing recently made $414, with its predecessor in similar condition just breaking $400. Pretty astonishing when you think about it. *Tusk* and *Mirage* on vinyl are less prized, but again, if you have a truly 'as new' copy, ideally unplayed and still sealed in its cellophane, there could be three-figure interest.



It is the *Rumours* lineup that boasts some of the highest-value Mac items – those that are autographed, and come with a Certificate Of Authenticity. Perhaps getting all five members in the same room at the same time might have been challenging, and so it is that signed copies of Mac albums – even *Mirage*! – have sold for $300-plus.

One oddity generated serious excitement in 2004: a "previously undocumented" 7in single by Fritz, Buckingham and Nicks' first band, recorded in San Mateo in 1968 and released on the Karma label. The seller supported his claim by sound samples ("with Stevie clearly audible in the harmonies," as he put it). The eBay auction started at $10, and 47 bids later sold for $880.





STOP ME

IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS ONE BEFORE

2015: A "brand new, prolific and profound and beautiful chapter" begins, says Lindsey Buckingham. MICHAEL BONNER supplies footnotes

IN 2015, THE message Fleetwood Mac have chosen to share with us is togetherness. For a band whose history has been characterised by departures, infidelity and addiction, the return of Christine McVie to the band's lineup after a 16-year-absence has felt like a rare harmonising moment. As Lindsey Buckingham rather grandly described it onstage during the band's residency at London's O2 Arena this summer, "With the return of the beautiful Christine, there is no doubt that we begin a brand new, prolific and profound and beautiful chapter in the story of this band, Fleetwood Mac."

In fact, McVie's return to active service is essentially the latest remarkable twist in Fleetwood Mac's story. Following their trajectory since the release of 2003's *Say You Will* album, familiar dramas have played out once again, along with a few new ones, too. In 2004, rumours circulated of a reunion of the Green/Spencer lineup; in 2007, Stevie Nicks revealed she no longer wished to perform with the Mac unless Christine McVie rejoined; a year later, Sheryl Crow let slip she and the band were discussing a potential collaboration. Less fancifully, two familiar faces from the old Mac lineups died within six months of each other – Bob Weston (January 3, 2012) and Bob Welch (June 7, 2012).

These events aside, the 21st Century Fleetwood Mac have continued to benefit from their most successful and notorious period. Their 2013 world tour was pillowed by a 35th-anniversary re-release of *Rumours*, while their "Extended Play" EP – the first new studio material in a decade – showcased a clutch of new songs that seemed deliberately evocative of that late-'70s period. They appeared attuned, too, to broader cultural shifts – the revival of the soft rock aesthetic, and the kind of West Coast vibes found on Haim's *Days Are Gone* album.

But in many respects Fleetwood Mac are actually a more interesting proposition away from the *Rumours* material. The 2013 reissue of the band's 1969 album, *Then Play On*, was a useful reminder of the magical guitar interplay between Peter Green and Danny Kirwan. And indeed, while it was nice enough to watch Christine McVie join her old band for "Don't Stop" – at London's O2 Arena on September 25, 2013 – it would have been more astonishing if Green had sauntered onstage to play "The Green Manalishi (With The Two Prong Crown)".

But the domestic dramas of four decades ago are still the motor for Fleetwood Mac's live shows. In 2013, for instance, the narrative privileged Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks as the tragic, star-crossed, former lovers reunited. For their 2015 tour, it was the return of Christine McVie. Not that you'd forget such a momentous occasion, of course: the band have a weird, almost neurotic need to constantly refer back to the narrative in hand. At the O2 shows in June, we were routinely told how delighted they all were that McVie was safely back in the fold.

Typically, the current live set focuses on the band's mid-'70s era. As a live proposition, the demarcation line between the early lineups and the Buckingham/Nicks era is so rigorously enforced that we're not treated to anything released prior to "the first album in this configuration" – as McVie rather formally describes *Fleetwood Mac*. Admittedly, it's hard to argue with the sheer brilliance of the Buckingham/Nicks/McVie configuration. But with McVie back in the band, the setlist highlights the disjunct between the band's three writers. Nicks soft-focus, McVie bright and nimble, Buckingham leftfield and surprisingly angry. Outwardly at least, McVie appears less eccentric than Buckingham and more grounded than Stevie Nicks.

Aside from Buckingham's excitable talk of new chapters, there is something telling about the name of the 2015 tour: On With The Show. It conjures up images of redoubtable showbiz troopers – which in a sense, is what the Mac are these days. For all their upheavals, the band's recent tours have provided ample evidence of professionals at work. Buckingham repeatedly demonstrates his worth as a fine, dextrous player, especially on "Big Love", "Landslide" and "Songbird". Only the overwhelming oddness of "Tusk" momentarily stops the set's warm, comfortable vibes.

But for all Buckingham's idiosyncracies and Nicks' *Twilight* theatrics, the heavy lifting is still done by the men with their names above the door. Mick Fleetwood might enjoy a little light thesping – the gong and wind chimes ensemble on "World Turning", for instance – but with John McVie he provides solid workmanship underpinning the Buckingham/Nicks flamboyance. As it transpires, the most unfussy players onstage are the former Mr and Mrs McVie. She very much the Laura Ashley mum, cheerful and polite, effortlessly delivering many of the set's best songs, he inscrutable behind his cap and waistcoat. A rarity among Fleetwood Mac members, the bassist is the only member of the band to keep his views entirely to himself.

Nicks, Buckingham and Fleetwood live at the O2, London, May 27, 2015

SAMIR HUSSEIN/GETTY IMAGES

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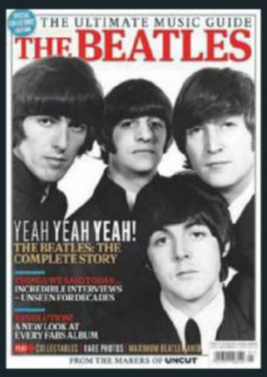

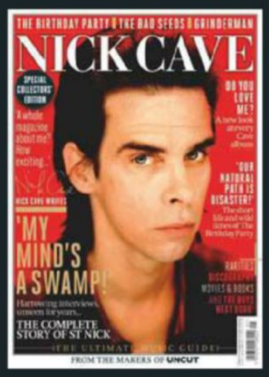

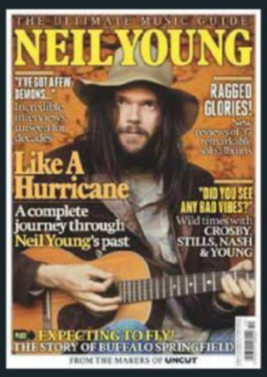

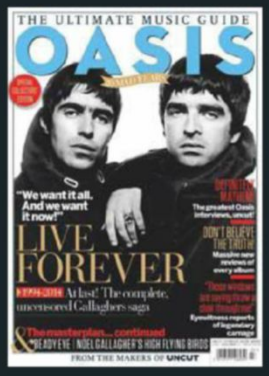

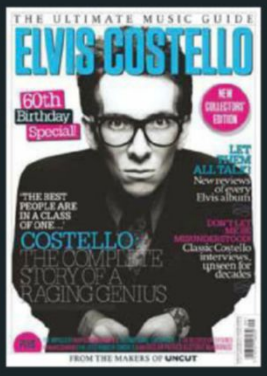

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